

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick**

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/37073>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

**A Question of Belonging:  
Imagining the Chinese in the British West Indies**

**by**

**Anne-Marie Michelle Lee-Loy**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies**

**University of Warwick, Centre for Translation and Cultural Studies  
October 2002**

# Table of Contents

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Introduction  | 1     |
| “Change and Transformation”: The Unstable Space of Nation                                 | 8     |
| “Unfinished Homemaking”: Incorporating a Chinese Presence into West Indian Nationhood     | 27    |
| “Configurations of Power”: Nineteenth Century Representations of the Chinese Community    | 80    |
| “Living Out Fantasies”: Fictional Representations of the Chinese in the Twentieth Century | 146   |
| “From the Edges”: Literary Self-Representations   | 209   |
| Conclusion  | 251   |
| Appendix A: National Symbols  | i     |
| Appendix B: Chinese Wood Engravings   | v     |
| Appendix C: National Dress  | vii   |
| Appendix D: Members of the Community  | viii  |
| Appendix E: Breaking the Silence  | ix    |
| List of Abbreviations   | xviii |
| Bibliography  | xix   |

# Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been completed without the guidance, support and criticism of my colleagues, family and friends. I am particularly indebted to Professor David Dabydeen who first challenged me to attempt this investigation and provided me with the tools to do so. I am forever grateful for the resources and guidance he provided, and his behind the scenes “cheerleading”. Dr. Victor Chang, Willi Chen, Easton Lee, and Janice Lo Shinebourne graciously shared their time and ideas, providing me with new insights into their work and a peek into the myriad ways of “being Chinese” in the West Indies. I am also grateful for Dr. Walton Look Lai and Patrick Chen’s early assistance in getting me started on the right track, Kathy Lee’s persistence in translating my uncle’s story and Dr. John Gilmore’s introduction to *Mr. On Loong*. I am greatly appreciative for Keith Lowe’s invitation to participate in the Hakka Heritage and Culture Conference (York University, December 2000) and for a similar invitation by the organisers of the Transforming Cultures/Shifting Boundaries Conference (University of Queensland, November/December 2001). The financial generosity of the Centre for Translation and Cultural Studies and the Graduate School, University of Warwick, allowed me to participate in the Transforming Cultures/Shifting Boundaries Conference, Australia, where the comments and questions of the delegates did much to help shape the final form of this project.

I relied heavily on the support of my family throughout this experience. My parents’, Samuel and Genevieve Lee-Loy, faith in my dreams has always been at the heart of any of my successes. Love, support and long phone calls were also provided by Dr. Ingrid Lee-Loy, Irwin Lee-Loy, and David Walker (who always made my heart smile). I am also grateful for the patience that my father, uncle and aunts showed in answering my questions and allowing me to delve into their memories. Friends and colleagues who showed particular interest in this project – proofreading and allowing me to “think out loud” in their presence – include: Dr. Marcia Burrowes, Dr. David Chariandy, Lisa Kozak and Sharon Stewart Guthrie. I am also greatly indebted to Professor Jack Healy who provided much guidance from afar and without whose practical assistance, I could not have attempted this research.



My trip to Jamaica would not have been possible without the kindness of Kellie-Ann Evans, Simone Schloss and Jeneen Raymond; the hospitality of Reverend Gordon and Mrs. Pauline Evans and family (who opened their home and their kitchen to me); and Reverend Maitland Evans and family (especially my uncomplaining “chauffeurs”, Makesha and Tara).

The professionalism and knowledgeable suggestions of the staff at the Bodelian Library, British Newspaper Library and the Public Record Office made this journey less difficult, as did the flexibility and understanding showed to me by Tracey Grant and David Ayrton, and my colleagues at the Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick.

This research was undertaken with the financial assistance of an Overseas Research Student Award (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom) and a student grant from the St. Catharines' Seventh Day Adventist Church.

This work is dedicated to my uncle, Vincent Lee, who honoured me with the gift of his story, and to the memory of my grandparents, Hilda Nelson and Lee Kai Biu.

## **Abstract**

### **A Question of Belonging: Imagining the Chinese in the British West Indies**

**by**

**Anne-Marie Michelle Lee-Loy**

**Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies**

**Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies**

**University of Warwick**

**October 2002**

This study examines what effect the presence of the Chinese in the West Indies had on understandings of belonging in terms of nation. It examines the construction of the category “Chinese” across different modes, particularly literary texts, from the nineteenth century to the present, and from the positions of colonial, creole and Chinese spaces. The results of this research challenge the common view that the Chinese have had a marginal impact on the perception of nationhood in the West Indies. Instead, images of the Chinese were, and continue to be, a key means of exploring the ambiguities, potentialities and limitations of nation as it developed in the West Indies. In particular, they reveal that neither “nation” nor “belonging” are static positions; rather, they signify continuing renegotiations of power relationships and cultural identities.

Several factors impact on representations of the Chinese. In the nineteenth century, such images were molded by the specific aims of colonial enterprises, entangled at the intersection of the discursive constructs of “East” and “West” during a period of mass migrations and the peculiar tensions of post-emancipation West

Indian societies. In the twentieth century, “the Chinese” have been created in response to a need to assert ownership of what was once colonised space and to perform nation before a global audience. Of late, Chinese West Indians have taken a more visibly active role in the construction and dissemination of images of themselves and their communities. In the process they have sometimes radically redefined the imaginative nation space of the West Indies and, in the process, challenge established boundaries of belonging, and contest “belonging” itself.

# Introduction

Chinyman

He moves haphazardly, blown along the pavement  
In uneven gusts, like rice paper.  
The oldest man in the world.  
Not for him, beneath the mask of grey  
Enamelled hair, dried dreams of palaces  
Floating on their pools of silken poetry  
Or orchideous concubines in rites of silk.  
More likely a drab exchange of servitude,  
Eastern soil for saltfish,  
And the crudely offered tithes paid daily  
On the mackerel counters by us lazy blacks  
Who'd rather spend than sell;  
The necessary sacrifice of language  
And the timeless shame of burial  
In this uncultured soil.  
Yet in the intricate embroidery of that face  
Are all the possibilities of legend:  
Kublai Khan in beggar's garb.

Loub-limbed and less immediately ancient  
I defer the pavement to this parchment schooner  
With no port, this ivory chorale of semitones.<sup>1</sup>

A highschool acquaintance once questioned how my father could be Jamaican and look “like *that*”. It took me a few moments to understand that she was asking how someone could have Chinese features and yet be considered Jamaican; and even longer to wonder why she found that which was obviously my lived reality, to be incongruous. Why did she find something incompatible in being both Chinese and West Indian? Is it that the Chinese inhabitants of the West Indies are always perceived as outsiders, wanderers “with no port”, the discordant note in the population? Or could they too be seen as having “all the possibilities of legend” within West Indian space? Essentially, these questions point to the issue that is at the heart of this thesis: Can the Chinese be imagined as belonging in the West Indies, particularly within the context of modern nationhood? And if so, what effect does their presence have on the conceptualisation of nation space?



When Benedict Anderson asserted that the nation is an imagined community, he articulated two significant concepts: first, that nations as we understand them, are not “natural”, but have been produced and require continual maintenance; and second, that the production of nation is largely the construction of an idea of community or belonging<sup>2</sup>. Belonging, in turn, is an expression of dialectical oppositions – there must be “non-belonging” to establish belonging. Therefore, if “nation” is to be imagined as a distinct, cohesive and clearly identifiable community, outsiders to this community must also be imagined. Indeed, in many ways, nation is a community of images representing outsiders and insiders. This research examines the interdependence between the creation and dissemination of images of the Chinese in Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana (the “British West Indies”) and the production of nation as a community of belonging in these areas. It argues that an exploration into the consistencies and contradictions that appear in the images of “John Chinaman”, “the heathen Chineese”, “the Chineese”, and even, “the Chinese” over different historical and discursive contexts not only provides important understanding into how belonging is being and has been produced in the West Indies, it also reveals significant ambiguities in the nature of belonging itself in relation to nationhood.

Images of the Chinese communities within the West Indies have developed over 150 years of migration<sup>3</sup>. The earliest Chinese to the West Indies arrived in 1806 when 192 indentured immigrants were brought to Trinidad to labour on the sugar

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Mordecai, ‘Chinyman’, *Caribbean Quarterly*, 15(4) (1969), 40.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), p. 6. Further reference to this work will be given after the quotation in the text.

<sup>3</sup> I am aware that using the term “the Chinese” to refer to immigrants from China and their descendants does not fully express the complex group of individuals and experiences that it is meant to encompass. Indeed, “the Chinese” is only used for ease of reading throughout this study, just as the term “Black” will be used to indicate individuals of African descent (“Coloured” will be used only when referring to that specific middle-class element of West Indian Black populations who considered themselves distinct from the Black masses); “White” for individuals of European descent; “Indian” for

estates and to help contain potential labour and political unrest. This initiative did not provide a true basis for the Chinese communities of the British West Indies as most of the migrants left when their terms of contract concluded. Serious Chinese immigration did not commence until the early 1850s.

Although, like the earlier migrants, these Chinese were brought to the West Indian colonies as indentured labourers, there were some significant differences between them and the 1806 group. One of the most important of these was the fact that the 1850s Chinese were entering post-emancipation environments – milieus rife with political, social and economic tensions. It was a period of explicit transition and the redefinition of relationships and loyalties throughout West Indian communities. The arrival of the newcomers and their subsequent depictions cannot be understood without taking such realities into consideration. Another significant difference from the earlier immigration was that the Colonial Office intended that these new migrants would become permanent settlers. This meant that family immigration was actively encouraged. In contrast, no women had migrated in the 1806 group. Despite the best efforts of the Colonial Office, only a relatively small number of Chinese women and families actually migrated in the nineteenth century. The Chinese migrants thus remained a predominantly male group, a factor that also affected early perceptions and interactions with other members of West Indian societies. Additionally, although their initial arrival into the West Indies was as estate labourers, the Chinese spent a comparatively short period as a community in this sector. Indeed, Chinese indentured labour ended, for all intents and purposes, in 1866 with the passing of the Kung Convention, the terms of which made it financially unattractive for estate owners to import Chinese labour. Indentured immigration from India, in comparison, lasted in

---

individuals from India. Additionally, for consistency, "Guyana" will be used throughout this text

the West Indies until 1917. Chinese migrants quickly became involved in other economic ventures, becoming particularly associated with the small retail or grocery trade by the twentieth century.

Chinese immigration in the twentieth century was no longer government sponsored. Instead, it consisted largely of businesspeople and would-be businesspeople seeking enterprise opportunities. Unlike their predecessors, they came with no intention of engaging in agricultural labour at any time; nor was their entrance facilitated or supported by the government. These factors would directly impact upon the perception of the place that the Chinese held in the West Indies, as did another important aspect of the times: the rise of nationalism and the push for national independence. The struggle for political and economic power that was inherent in nationalism helped to increase awareness of the Chinese presence in the West Indies and to raise questions about their place therein. The images of the Chinese produced during this period, like their predecessors, were shaped by the historical and discursive contexts in which they were created, reinvented and repeated. They were, and continue to be, responses to the continuing dynamic intersection of political, economic and social pressures that occur in everyday life. It is these images, fragmented and unstable, yet often monotonously consistent, that reveal the ambiguities of national belonging and form a central focus of this study.

In chapter one, I consider how the concept of “the nation” has been constructed by reviewing major theories on nationhood. I explore one of the most significant debates in this areas, namely whether a nation consists of an ethnic or civic community, as embodied in the work of leading theorists including Gellner, Hobsbawm, Anderson and Connor. Anthony D. Smith’s concept of the nation as an

---

instead of “British Guiana”, except in instances of direct quotes.



uncomfortable combination of ethnic and civic qualities is reviewed and the means by which nation is performed and maintained are also explored, with particular attention to the work of Bhabha and Foucault.

Chapter two explores ambivalent representations of the Chinese as they occur in important sites of national discourse. It begins by examining the failure of creole theory to produce stable and inclusive images of Chinese belonging in the West Indies. The ambivalence towards the Chinese identified as integral to the creole theory is also traced in the production of the nation through national symbols and rhetoric.

Chapter three considers the historical factors that helped create nineteenth century images of the Chinese in the West. It demonstrates that the creation of these images was directly affected by the conflicts inherent in European economic expansion and the experiences of Christian missionaries in China. The unique political, social and economic conditions of the West Indies, however, meant that widespread images of the Chinese in the Western imagination were not re-inscribed exactly as they were produced elsewhere. Instead, they were adjusted to meet the needs of West Indian colonial conditions and the discourses of power therein. Many of these images would set the tone for long-term perceptions of the Chinese in the West Indies.

Very few fictional representations of the Chinese were created in the West Indies during the nineteenth century. As a result, chapter three is based largely on images created in official government texts, letters and reports, as well as newspaper articles and debates. In chapter four, however, the focus switches to an examination of twentieth century images of the Chinese in fiction. The imaginative landscape of West Indian texts provides very few major Chinese characters; however, this does not mean

that images of the Chinese are equally sparse. In fact, references to the Chinese and supporting Chinese characters populate a plethora of texts and provide important means of examining the ambiguity of West Indian nation space. Like their nineteenth century counterparts, these images reflect the tensions of their times, particularly regarding access to political and economic power. They differ from nineteenth century images in particular because they are often constructed within a conscious debate on belonging and nation. Nevertheless, they too demonstrate the shifting nature of representation in terms of designating insiders and outsiders to the nation, and even the boundaries of the nation themselves.

The final chapter in this study examines fiction and poetry produced by Chinese West Indians. It identifies those similarities and differences in the manner in which these authors represent their communities' relationships to the nation. It also explores the peculiar difficulties that face Chinese West Indians' attempts at self-representation within an imaginative space that is highly coded in terms of the possibilities and limitations of a Chinese West Indian Self. Their appropriations of and resistance to established images of the Chinese create an added complexity to the issue of ambiguity in terms of representing belonging and even to the question of national boundaries by suggesting alternate spaces of belonging for the Chinese.

By focusing on representations of the Chinese, this thesis demonstrates the significant role played by images in the making of the nation as well as the elusiveness of the nation as a discrete and rigidly defined community. It shows that "the Chinese" are imagined as both insiders and outsiders to the nation, depending on the context in which these images are constructed. As such, the creation and dissemination of Chinese images is shown to play a vital role in articulating both the ambivalence of nation and of belonging itself.

This research was undertaken in an environment notable for the striking paucity of academic work in this area. There is, at present a serious absence of critical analysis on the Chinese presence in the West Indies, other than the historical research of Walton Look Lai, a handful of articles and post-graduate dissertations, and a few personal histories. As a result, as a field of academic inquiry, the Chinese of the West Indies remain essentially unexplored territory, particularly in understanding their cultural impact. This work seeks to address this lack of research by attempting to go beyond a simple recognition of the historical presence of the Chinese or an examination of their economic roles (the areas in which most work has been focused); rather, it seeks to understand long-term effects of Chinese migration on the social and cultural development of West Indian nations. As such, it hopes to be an original contribution to the understanding of West Indian cultural spaces and to affirm the validity of “the West Indian Chinese” as a site meriting academic investigation.

# Chapter One

## “Change and Transformation”: The Unstable Space of Nation

“Identities are . . . constantly in the process of change and transformation.”

Stuart Hall<sup>4</sup>

### Introduction

The nation is a relatively modern political phenomenon<sup>5</sup>; yet its global pervasiveness and the terms in which it is framed have created the impression that the nation, as we know it today, is both absolute and eternal. This sense of permanence is largely the result of language, rituals and images that present nations as cohesive, timeless and natural communities. A closer examination of the terms within which nationhood is imagined, as well as the strategies by which such images are maintained reveal, however, that the concept of nation is much less stable. Tensions between theoretical and practical understandings of nation, combined with the continually changing political, social and economic conditions within which nations exist, contribute to an inherent ambiguity at the heart of the concept of the nation; an instability perhaps best captured in the question: “who belongs in the nation?” Because of the unique conditions of their immigration, their relative numerical insignificance, distinctive ethnic features, and their high level of visibility amongst the population,

---

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity’?’, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), p. 4. Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>5</sup> The modernity of the nation has been thoroughly explored in works such as Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner’s *Nation and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm’s *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Eli Kedourie’s *Nationalism*, fourth expanded edition (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994). Further references to these works are given after quotations in the text.



representations of Chinese West Indians provide an important perspective from which to investigate the ambiguities of belonging within British West Indian nation space.

## **What is a Nation?**

Before addressing the question, “who belongs in the nation?”, another more fundamental question must be asked: “what is a nation?” On one level, “nation” can be defined as a political unit that has its own internationally recognised territorial boundaries and government. Such a definition, however, obscures the fact that nations do not exist solely in tangible terms – they are also imagined entities. They exist in images and language that refer constantly to a state of belonging. “Nation” expresses the idea that the world’s populations consist of discrete communities composed of individuals who somehow belong to each other. Thus, the concept of the nation is perhaps best understood as a social and cultural construction that affirms the existence of a distinct community and uses this community to legitimise a political establishment. But on what grounds is belonging to this community established? Two theoretical approaches have dominated debates on this issue: the first is a civic-based approach, which situates belonging within shared civic values, goals and responsibilities, while the second establishes the boundaries of community in terms of ethnicity.

Theorists who define nations in terms of civic-based communities argue that the nation is a political entity that was developed in response to the new political and economic conditions of modernity. Central to such arguments is the marking out of boundaries of belonging in terms of shared political values and ambitions, and the mutual responsibilities of citizens. Of these theorists, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson have made a significant impact.

For Gellner, the nation developed specifically because it was the political unit that best protected and met the needs of an industrial economy. Gellner contends that industrialisation required an endless supply of anonymous individuals who could easily replace each other in a production-line based economy. This could only occur if members of society shared a generic training and a fixed system of communication – a “standardized homogenous centrally sustained high culture” (Gellner, 55). Gellner argues that the state was the only body that had the capabilities to develop and maintain the systems needed to disseminate and support such a generic culture. Thus, culture, that is “high culture”, and political administration, the state, became linked. He concludes that the nation is the entity that developed out of this union.

In his analysis, Gellner makes an important distinction between the state supported high culture and what he defines as local culture. High culture is based on universal literacy, and shared communication and educational systems distributed throughout the political unit. Local culture, on the other hand, is defined in more insular terms and is connected with the daily experiences and interactions of closed communities. This distinction is important to the understanding of boundaries within Gellner’s construction of nation for it suggests the possibility of an overarching community that is open and accessible to a wide and varied population, regardless of local differences.

Anderson’s classic definition of the nation as an imagined political community which is both limited and sovereign also draws on the conditions of modern industrialisation and the cultural homogenisation which occurred as a result of this economic change (Anderson, p. 6). Anderson argues that imagining the nation in this manner could only take place in the presence of modern industrial technology, particularly the printing press. Print languages helped to define communities in terms

of the ability to understand the language: “us” was the group who could understand the language in print and “them” were those who could not. Additionally, Anderson notes that the relationship between print language and the ability to imagine nationhood was very practical as it was in print that ideas of nationhood were produced and discussed.

As with Gellner, the boundaries of the community within which Anderson situates his idea of nation consists of qualities that are not innate to the members therein; rather, they can be consciously acquired. For example, an individual might speak one dialect at home, and yet be able to communicate in a different language, such as the language of state. Like other theorists of this bent, Anderson’s work expresses the belief that nation can consist of a broad, somewhat nebulous sense of community that ignores or marginalises cultural differences within the population. Nevertheless, such work seems unable to adequately account for the emotional intensity and the widespread popularity of the idea of nation. This suggests that “national belonging” is also being represented within highly emotive terms. Indeed, as the other side of the debate shows, nation is often imagined with a much more emotionally appealing and restrictive boundary of community membership: ethnicity.

The term “ethnicity” is used in the field of social anthropology to indicate boundaries between groups who consider themselves to be culturally distinct from others<sup>6</sup>. Those cultural markers used to signify this difference have been described by Manning Nash as existing in “blood, substance and deity”; that is, a belief in shared biological descent; a sense of commensality among group members; and a belief in a

---

<sup>6</sup> For discussions on the term “ethnicity”, see Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p. 4 and Walker Connor ‘Terminological Chaos’ (‘A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a . . .’), *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 210 – 226. Further references to these works are given after quotation in the text.



common value system<sup>7</sup>. In his similar definition of “ethnie”, Anthony D. Smith also includes shared historical memories, a link with a homeland and a name for the group as criteria for ethnic boundaries. In both definitions, it is the sense of blood ties, that is understood to be the fundamental bond between members of the community. Distinctive group features, such as language, physical traits or ancestral myths, become important means of reinforcing the sense of kinship.

If, as Hobsbawm has noted, nations developed from a “principle of nationality”, such a principle was quickly transformed (Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms*, pp. 18 –19)<sup>8</sup>. Hobsbawm argues that “nation” soon referred to a political and cultural entity of which ethnic difference is the defining attribute. Indeed, images of nation are often built around an ethnic cultural matrix that essentially represents a family-based community. For example, early modern nations often secured their legitimacy by claiming overtly or subtly that they were re-establishing or giving political legitimacy to a folk culture where “folk” were defined in ethnic terms<sup>9</sup>. Even “modernist” theories of nationhood are not entirely emptied of ethnic specificity. For example, in spite of Gellner’s insistence that nations are built around a “high culture”, he defines nationalism as a theory of political legitimacy based on the idea that ethnic and political boundaries should coincide (Gellner, p. 1). Anderson’s work reveals a similar tension in that although the development of printed language may have been the necessary condition for imagining the nation, the terms and images used to express nationhood in print often validated kinship ties. Indeed, it has been argued that the

---

<sup>7</sup> Manning Nash, ‘The Core Elements of Ethnicity’, *Ethnicity*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> According to Hobsbawm, the “principle of nationality” expressed the nineteenth century belief that only some communities had the “right” to be considered nations. This “right” was based on the size of the nation, the existence of a long-established cultural elite and the ability to conquer others. Ethnic markers, as such, were deemed irrelevant.

<sup>9</sup> For examples, see Eriksen’s *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, op. cit., and *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Canto edition (Cambridge: University Press, 1992).

popularity of nationhood lies in this sense of family ties; in other words, “the passions at either end of the hate-love continuum which nation often inspires and the countless fanatical sacrifices that have been made in its name” have been done for family<sup>10</sup>.

Walker Connor defines nation as a “group of people characterized by a myth of common descent”<sup>11</sup>. He argues that this common descent may not exist in fact, however, it is only important that group members believe it does. “Nation” is thus limited to a kinship group expressed in ethnic terms; national identity is defined as the tangible expression of a belief in a myth of shared ancestry; and nationalism is understood to be the demonstration of loyalty to the kinship group, particularly against perceived threats from outsiders. In a similar fashion, Thomas Hylland Eriksen argues that nationalism is a specific ethnic ideology: “A nationalist ideology is an ethnic ideology which demands a state on behalf of the ethnic group” (Eriksen, p. 118). Like Connor, Eriksen concludes that the fundamental feature of the nation is that it claims to represent the interests of a particular ethnic group. Together, they and theorists like them, construct boundaries around the national community that are more rigid than those surrounding the civic-based model of nation since one must be “born into” the nation family to truly belong.

Ethnic formulations of national community, as with their civic-based counterparts, are not free from a certain level of ambiguity in terms of establishing boundaries of belonging. For example, Connor makes a clear distinction between “nation” and “state”, contending that the state is merely a political-territorial unit that can, as such, contain any number of nations. Such a position means that individuals can see themselves as being part of two communities, their nation and their state.

---

<sup>10</sup> Walker Connor, “When is a Nation?” (‘From Tribe to Nation?’), *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, op. cit., pp. 210 – 226 (p. 206).

<sup>11</sup> Walker Connor, ‘More Recent Developments’ (‘Ethnonationalism’), *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, op. cit., pp. 68 – 86 (p. 75).

Indeed, Connor recognises the potential tension between the two spaces of belonging when he argues that multinational states fabricate rituals, myths and symbols (Hobsbawm's "invented traditions"<sup>12</sup>) aimed at fostering loyalty to the state and counteracting potential threats to political stability that the "natural loyalty" to one's nation might create.

Rather than conceiving of nation as solely either a civic or ethnic-based community, Anthony D. Smith posits that nations combine elements of both, and by doing so, recognises that the tensions between the two concepts of belonging are very much a part of nation itself. Smith contends that the modern nation "has come to blend two sets of dimensions, the one civic and territorial, the other ethnic and genealogical in varying proportions in particular cases"<sup>13</sup>. Thus, nations that are predominantly ethnic in style still seek to inculcate common civic aspirations, whilst nations that are grounded in a more civic tradition legitimise themselves by using images and language more closely associated with ethnic groups.

Smith's concept of nation has particular implications for the representation of belonging in the British West Indies. It suggests that boundaries of belonging in terms of the nation are prone to slippage and shifting; that "the relationship of modern nations to any ethnic core is problematic and uncertain" (Smith, *National Identity*, p. 41). Smith claims that a more civic style of nation is the choice of most ex-colonies, like those of the British West Indies. He posits that nationalists in such regions have two ways of expressing civic nationhood. The first is the dominant ethnic group model in which the official national culture is based on the cultural components of the dominant ethnic group in the state, often by drawing on the past experiences of this

---

<sup>12</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Tradition', *The Invention of Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 1 – 14. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 15. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.



group. This model creates significant difficulties for British West Indian nationalists because the core group in terms of population number, namely the slaves and ex-slaves, had their culture and history severely fragmented by colonialism. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the dominant groups in terms of power, the Coloured middle-class and White elites, had ambivalent feelings towards the Black masses and their African heritage which impeded any Africanist “return” in terms of constructing national identity. The second option for British West Indian nationalists, according to Smith, would be to attempt to build nationhood on what Smith calls the “supra-ethnic” model. National identity in this model is constructed by making a conscious effort not to prioritise any ethnic group within the nation and by identifying civic values and common political ambitions as the basis of group solidarity.

Smith notes, however, that attempts to establish supra-ethnic national identities have never been entirely successful for reasons including: the fact that original nations, the models for new nations, had been explicitly conceived of in terms of an ethnic core; the considerable difficulty in replacing compelling ethnic ties with generic civic bonds; and the appeal of drawing on the emblems and experiences of one ethnic group to facilitate the creation of cohesive national myths and symbols. This is particularly evident in the representation of the relationship between minority groups, like the Chinese, and other members of the national community. On one hand, ethnic-based representations of nation exclude the Chinese, since, as a minority, their cultural matrix would not be used to define the national community. On the other hand, the inclusive tendencies of civic-based constructions of nation, particularly attractive in the nation-building exercises of former colonies consisting of multiethnic populations, allow the Chinese potential membership within the national space. In the West Indies, this tension is revealed in the shifting depiction of the Chinese between

two polar ends of a spectrum of belonging: the Chinese are portrayed either as the ultimate outsiders to the nation, or as insiders, whose inclusion within the boundaries of the respective national communities is used to demonstrate the existence of unique West Indian cultural spaces. This ambiguity becomes particularly evident in the manner in which concepts of nation are translated into daily expressions of nationhood – that is, in the performance of nation.

## **Performing Nation: “Double-Time” and Discourse**

To have practical resonance for both its citizens and outsiders to the nation, the national narrative – the story of the nation – must refer not only to the nation in its mythic form, but to the nation as it exists on a day-to-day level. Ambiguity arises because the reality of experience – the “lived nation” – can never be as coherent and holistic as the mythic nation. Indeed, in the former colonies of the British West Indies, the tension caused by the gap between the mythic and the “lived” nation is amplified by the unique pressures of their post-colonial, multiethnic status.

Identifying the space between discourse and lived experience, or what he calls the “tension between the pedagogical and the performative”, and examining the cultural and discursive implications for narrative strategies caused by this gap is the central focus of Homi Bhabha’s article ‘DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation’<sup>14</sup>. For Bhabha, the nation exists in a double-time, in-between space which is made evident by the “continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or ‘cultural difference’ that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation” (ibid., p. 292). Bhabha argues that

---

<sup>14</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation’, *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291 – 322 (p. 297). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

the national narrative must negotiate between the present and the past in such a fashion that the present is always being collapsed into the past. Nations legitimise their existence on the claim that the nation always existed. At the same time, however, the nation exists in current, contemporary time. The “current time nation” must correspond with the “timeless nation” if either nation is to exist. As a result, the “language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past” (ibid., p. 294). It is in this “becoming”, this “double-time” that ambivalent representations occur:

The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of the modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*. (ibid., p. 297)

As part of his argument, Bhabha examines the representation of “the people”. He suggests that within national narratives, “the people” exist as both a pedagogical object, that is a community with a self-generated identity, and as a system of signification that attempts to recreate the pedagogical image at the same time as it marks a boundary between the Self (those within the nation) and the Others (those without). The narrative authority on which “the people” as Self is established is thus interrupted by the performance of Self; for this performance undermines the authoritative closure on which the pedagogical image is based. In other words, the process of signification points to the constructed nature of the Self and to the choices being made to create this Self and as such, opens up a space in which the representation of “the people” can be contested and displaced. Thus, the “boundary that marks the nation’s selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of national



production with a space of representation that threatens binary division with its difference” (ibid., p. 299).

Important to Bhabha’s argument is the presence of minority people groups and minority discourses. Their very existence, he argues, disrupts the national timeline and memory established in national discourses and problematises the interpretation of those signs used to represent the nation. Bhabha works through his argument by paying special attention to the figure of the post-colonial migrant in the metropolis. For Bhabha, the presence of the minority figure “turns the nostalgic past into the disruptive ‘anterior’ and displaces the historical present – opens it up to other histories and incommensurable narrative subjects” (ibid., p. 318).

Bhabha’s argument raises significant issues when it is removed from the metropole that is his focus and is placed within a post-colonial environment. In post-colonial spaces, nationhood has neither the perceived historical certainty nor the settled nature that it has in established nations and against which Bhabha writes; however, the discourse of nation through which these new states must express themselves retains this conceptual framework. How is the attempt to establish, rather than challenge, national narrative affected by the inherent ambiguities of nationhood? Can a minority discourse ever truly become a “majority discourse”, or does its very own subversive qualities undermine its authority? Does the migrant in the post-colonial society play the same disruptive role in terms of discourse as the post-colonial migrant in the metropole? What practical pressures faced by the new post-colonial nations impact on their strategies of representation and contribute to the creation of unstable images? Such issues are raised through the examination of Chinese representations in the West Indies.



To examine the representation of Chinese in the West Indies is also an opportunity to study how Bhabha's "silent Other", that is, the migrant, impacts on the understanding of nationhood (ibid., p. 316). Bhabha has argued that the migrant presence splits the patriotic unison of national narratives because the "opacity of language fails to translate or break through his silence" (ibid., p. 316). Bhabha's point is that the nation's memory is contained in its language and that language communicates a cultural perspective<sup>15</sup>. The migrant is distanced from these major functions of language and is, to a large degree "language-less". Thus, the migrant's silence, caused by his inability to speak the language with the same cultural authority as "the native", opens up a space of uncertainty around language use in which meanings shift and knowledge becomes untranslatable.

For the Chinese in the West Indies, however, the silence goes beyond what Bhabha has noted. As yet, no author of Chinese descent from the former West Indian colonies has achieved widespread critical acclaim, along the lines of V.S. Naipaul or Derek Walcott, for example; textual portrayals of Chinese are generally created by outsiders to their communities. As a group, the Chinese remain a strangely familiar, yet exotic unknown within West Indian texts. Consequently, their representations say more about how the greater West Indian communities perceive the position of the Chinese and their relationships to other members of society, than provide a true Chinese counter-narrative or minority voice within national narratives. Their silence also allows them to be represented in a more iconic or stereotypical fashion than most other ethnic groups when mapping out the imaginative landscape of the nation; and,

---

<sup>15</sup> Elie Kedourie makes a similar point. Drawing on late eighteenth and early nineteenth century philosophy, Kedourie argues that language specificity is connected to an equally specific way of life and worldview:

Language is the means through which a man becomes conscious of his personality. Language is not only a vehicle for rational propositions, it is the outer expression of an inner experience, the outcome of a particular history, the legacy of a distinctive tradition. (*Nationalism*, p. 56.)

this reduction, in turn, facilitates tracing inconsistencies in imaginative visions of West Indian nationhood. Because little attention is paid to their development as multidimensional characters, these Chinese characters tend to be used more like stage props within texts to establish some basic assumptions about the scene within which nationhood is acted out.

What I am suggesting is that representations of Chinese characters in West Indian texts can be seen as signs making up a “system of representation”; that is, “ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts [in this case, “the nation”] and of establishing complex relations between them”<sup>16</sup>. Through systems of representation, the concept of the nation as a community of belonging is defined. When such systems of representation are a specific set of narratives and images, they become discourse – a way of speaking about a subject that both defines and constructs that same subject. In relation to West Indian nationhood, I am proposing that those discourses that produce “the Chinese” are also producing “the nation” by using the Chinese presence to define the boundaries of nation. In other words “the Chinese” are one of the definitive images within the system of representation used to express West Indian nationhood. Thus, the examination of “the Chinese” in this study is very much an examination of two discursive subjects: “the nation” and “the Chinese”.

Michel Foucault argues that discourse consists of those statements and narratives that together create knowledge about a subject; and in the process, produce the subject<sup>17</sup>. Foucault recognises, however, that such knowledge is never simply innocuous and objective; rather, it expresses relationships of power that affect how

---

<sup>16</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE in association with The Open University, 1997), p. 17. Further references to this text are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>17</sup> For more on Foucault, see *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books Ltd., [n.d.]), particularly those sections excerpted from *Discipline and Punish* and *Power/Knowledge*.

such subjects are “managed” in everyday interchanges. For Foucault, discourse is the bringing together of language and practice by creating knowledge that defines power relations.

Foucault also made the important argument that discourses are historically specific. As such, a “discursive subject” is actually the expression of power relationships at specific historical moments. Therefore, discourses only reveal (or produce knowledge about) a subject in the manner that best addresses the power issues of the moment rather than depict a “true” representation of the subject. What this means in terms of West Indian nationhood, is that the representation of the Chinese communities in discourse is indicative of and responsive to power issues at particular periods of West Indian history. Specifically, these images reveal the question of power in defining that community which would be “allowed” to lay claim to the privileges and benefits of nationhood. This aspect of discourse also affects the overall representation of the Chinese for it means that these images must shift to meet the needs of particular discourses.

## **Literature as a Site of Investigation**

If we are to discuss nationhood in terms of representation and discourse then it is fairly obvious that, for the purpose of this study, nation is being considered in terms of a “a system of cultural signification” and not simply as a political entity<sup>18</sup>. This is not to ignore the political aspects of nationhood; however, it does draw attention to the fact that, particularly in relatively new, post-colonial nations, culture is often used to justify and maintain the independent political status of the state. In ‘On National Culture’, for example, Frantz Fanon explicitly links the existence and production of a



national culture with the development of a coherent nationalist independence movement when he argues that the independent nation is the only structure in which a vibrant and vital national culture can exist<sup>19</sup>. Fanon's definition of "national culture" points to the nation's existence as a discursive and representational strategy.

For Fanon, national culture is "the expression of a nation, the expression of its preferences, of its taboos and of its patterns", "the whole body of efforts made by a people *in the sphere of thought* to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (ibid., pp. 196 and 188, emphasis added). Essentially, such a definition implies that the nation is an idea of community that is expressed, valorised and legitimised through cultural practices. Literary works become important to the creation of nation because they are part of the "sphere of thought" in which nation exists. Literature is a space in which the national culture can be performed. Thus, Fanon deems literature to be "the mouthpiece" of nation (ibid., p. 179).

Timothy Brennan also argues that literary texts are a particularly suitable site to examine "the nation-centerdness of the post-colonial world"<sup>20</sup>. He holds that the post-World War Two "Third World artist" is either highly aware of the lack of nation and nationalism, or is involved in trying to develop both. Fiction is the means by which many such artists express this lack, or endeavour to address such lack and, at the same time, assert the legitimacy of the new state – to be "seen" in the global environment. Indeed, a major impetus of post-colonial texts has been identified as the desire "to

---

<sup>18</sup> Homi K. Bhabha 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation', *Nation and Narration*, op. cit., pp. 3 – 7 (p. 3). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>19</sup> Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture', *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (1963), preface by Jean-Paul Satre, 1<sup>st</sup> Evergreen Edition (New York: Grove Press, 1991), pp. 167 – 199. Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', *Nation and Narration*, op. cit., pp. 44 – 70 (p. 47). Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

witness their society”<sup>21</sup>. It has been said that post-colonial literatures are the “attempt to assemble the fragments of a national life and give them a final shape. Such fiction becomes documents designed to prove national consciousness, with multiple, myriad components that display an active communal life” (Brennan, p. 61). As a result, nation becomes largely a product of imaginative vision and a fictional discourse. As Brennan himself puts it, nations “are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role” (ibid., p. 49).

There is a danger, however, in focusing exclusively on the relationship between nationhood and post-colonial literatures. As Aijaz Ahmad recognises, some theorists have approached post-colonial literatures with such a narrowed focus that they limit the themes and concerns of these works to nationalism and national allegory<sup>22</sup>. Colonialism is defined as the all-encompassing experiential moment of the post-colonial world and such literatures are reduced to sharing one narrative voice. As Ahmad rightly complains,

If this ‘Third World’ is *constituted* by the singular ‘experience of colonialism and imperialism’, and if the only possible response is a nationalist one, then what else is there that is more urgent to narrate than this ‘experience’? In fact, there is *nothing else* to narrate . . . what else *can* one narrate but that national oppression? (Ahmad, p. 79)

Such an approach to post-colonial writing invalidates any other historical, political and social factors that impact upon post-colonial societies and essentialises these texts so that they become the binary “Others” to writings from the so-called First and Second Worlds.

---

<sup>21</sup> Simon During, ‘Literature – Nationalism’s Other?’, *Nation and Narration*, op. cit., pp. 138 – 153 (p. 152).

<sup>22</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, ‘Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’’, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 77 – 82. Ahmad uses the term “Third World” instead of “post-colonial”.

It is not the intention of this study to reproduce these reductive categories in the examination of texts from Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana. In fact, very few of the texts used in this research are overtly nationalistic; neither will they be read as national allegories. Instead, they will be read within the context of Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism; that is, as texts in which ideas of nation are acted out in common, everyday fashion.

Billig challenges the idea that nationalism is only a political movement aimed exclusively at establishing nation states. Instead, he suggests that nationalism exists in a quiet, yet persistent form in established Western nations where its aim is to maintain, rather than create, a nation. As such, the nation forms the continual, if unacknowledged, backdrop against and within which individuals exist. He locates the habits of everyday social life as sites of national identity, that is, the ideological expression of nation, such that he defines national identity as "forms of social life rather than internal psychological states"<sup>23</sup>. Thus, he concludes that nationalism "far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition" (ibid., p. 6).

Those everyday practices used to remind citizens that they live in a world of nations and, more importantly, within a specific nation, are defined by Billig as "flagging the nation". Examples of this flagging include speaking of national news or of international sports competitions. Thus, banal nationalism does not consist of conscious flag waving; rather it is found in the limp, unnoticed national flags that mark out and affirm the existence of the nation<sup>24</sup>. Billig's argument suggests that the nation

---

<sup>23</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995) p. 24. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>24</sup> Billig's idea of nation flagging, that is, "banal nationalism", shares the central idea of "ideology" as it developed in Marxist tradition; namely, that specific ideas or sets of ideas are made normative by the use of symbols and cultural practices. In particular, Louis Althusser argues that the socialisation process inherent to ideology is carried out by two types of state apparatuses, Repressive



is reproduced subtly within texts even when such texts are not explicitly nationalistic. In other words, in the attempt to create realistic representations of their societies, authors recreate an everyday understanding of nation. Simply put, they are ideological apparatuses for national narratives.

## Conclusion

Essentially, this research investigates the construction of two overlapping spaces of belonging – that of “the Chinese” as a population group within the West Indies and that of “the nation”. It accepts as a starting point, Stuart Hall’s assertion that identities are constructed within representational strategies that use history, language and culture as building blocks. It also accepts that representations of the Chinese and the nation are expressions of power legitimised by marking out difference. In this sense, to examine representations of the Chinese is to enter into inherently ambiguous space, for

Identities are never unified and [are] . . . increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (Hall, ‘Who Needs ‘Identity’’, p. 4)

In particular, three pressures contribute to the unstable representations of the Chinese: first, there is a certain amount of ambivalence embedded within the concept

---

State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). RSAs impact directly upon an individual’s behaviour through repressive means, including the police or judiciary systems. More importantly for this study is the concept of ISAs – those institutions and organisations, including educational, political and religious institutions, that generate and normalise discourses about cultural norms. In terms of understanding nationhood as a community of belonging, Althusser and Billig are arguing that nation is reproduced through ideological habits in both obvious (such as state symbols) and less obvious (such as day-to-day exchanges between citizens) locations. (See Louis Althusser ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’, *Critical Thought Since 1965*, ed. by Hazard Adams and Leroy Searles (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, Florida State University Press, 1986), pp. 238 – 250.)



of nation itself in the tension between imagining the nation as either a civic or ethnic entity; second, there is the “gap” between performing and speaking identity, that is Bhabha’s “double time”; and finally, the inherent instability of discourses themselves as they respond to the changing pressures of their historical moments. These factors render “the Chinese” as a fluid and changeable image. In particular, “the Chinese” as a representational strategy in the West Indies are placed in the seemingly contradictory positions as both insiders and outsiders to nation space.

## Chapter Two

### **“Unfinished Homemaking”: Incorporating a Chinese Presence into West Indian Nationhood**

“Nations, rather, are one form in which modern cultures have been articulated.”  
Bill Schwarz<sup>25</sup>

“Cultures are ways of territorializing, the ways one makes oneself at home”  
J. Macgregor Wise<sup>26</sup>

#### **Introduction**

In the article ‘Home: Territory and Identity’, J. Macgregor Wise argues that “home” is essentially a space of comfort marked out through repetitive cultural processes – processes defined as “homemaking”. In this context, “home” is not simply a physical territory or a literal milieu; rather, it is an emotional place of belonging or identification. To be “at home”, therefore, is to inhabit a space comfortably. The article distinguishes between “home” and “house” by making an analogy to the difference between nation and state that is particularly important to this study: if “home” is “the nation” and “house” is “the state”, then “nation” is the sense of belonging within the state. As chapter one has demonstrated, however, belonging is itself ambiguous due to the complexities in constructing and performing nation and to the changeable nature of discourse; or as Macgregor Wise puts it, the “relation between home and the home [that is, the house] is always being negotiated” (Macgregor Wise, p. 300). It is in this negotiation that the ambivalent relationship between West Indian nations and the Chinese reveals a striking reality: the Chinese are never quite at home because the home is never quite complete.

---

<sup>25</sup> Bill Schwarz, ‘England in Europe: Reflections on National Identity and Cultural Theory’, *Cultural Studies*, 6 (1992), 198 – 206 (p. 198).

## Imagining Nation: Creole Theory

At the heart of the concept of nation is the idea of a holistic, unified community; however, the ability to imagine such a community in the British West Indies has always been complicated. Indeed, it has often been posited that West Indian spaces are inherently fragmented and that, as a result of the detrimental experience of colonialism and imperialism, no real sense of community can exist. In contrast, the creole theory of nation, most closely associated with the work of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, asserts that multiethnic interchange can and does occur and, in the process, creates a new, broad and inclusive nation space; yet, in practice, as this chapter demonstrates, the theory struggles to incorporate the Chinese presence in a meaningful and substantial way.

For West Indian theorists, creolisation is generally understood to mean that process by which disparate ethnic elements and experiences are synthesised to create something completely unique to the West Indies. Arguably, it has become the most popular theory for expressing West Indian community<sup>27</sup>. Indeed, it has even been

---

<sup>26</sup> J. Macgregor Wise, 'Home: Territory and Identity', *Cultural Studies*, 14(2) (2000), 295 – 310 (p. 300). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>27</sup> Generally, the most common alternative models for imagining West Indian space have been the plural and plantation models. (For further reading on this topic, see George L. Beckford, *Persistent Poverty. Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York, London and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972); Denis M. Benn, 'The Theory of Plantation Economy and Society: A Methodological Critique', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 12(3) (1974) 49 – 260; Lloyd A. Best, 'The Mechanism of Plantation-Type Economies. Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy', *Social and Economic Studies*, 17(3) (1968), 283 – 397; Malcolm Cross, 'Cultural Pluralism and Sociological Theory: A Critique and Re-evaluation', *Social and Economic Studies*, 17(4), 381 – 397; Leo A. Despres, 'Anthropological Theory, Cultural Pluralism, and the Study of Complex Societies', *Current Anthropology*, 9(1) (1968), 3 – 26 and *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in Guyana* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1967); Sidney W. Mintz, 'Caribbean Nationhood: An Anthropological Perspective', *Caribbean Transformations*, paperback edition (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press Ltd., 1984), 302 – 328; H.S. Morris, 'Some Aspects of the Concept of Plural Society', *Man* (new series), 2(2) (1967), 169 – 184; and M.G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965)). Unlike Brathwaite's concept of creolisation, the plural and the plantation models are clear in their exclusion of the Chinese from West Indian space. For example, both models imagine societies consisting of discrete groups with no meaningful cross-group cultural interaction or



argued that “Caribbean identity occurs within the discursive space of the “Creole”; that is, to be “Caribbean” is to be creolised.<sup>28</sup> The concepts of “creole” and “creolisation” are not, however, specifically West Indian terms. In fact, their meanings differ depending on their particular historical, geographical and social contexts. In general, however, “creole” is used to demarcate a division between the Old World (the place of emigration) and the New World (usually the Americas) and, at the same time, to recognise links between the two spaces. Creolisation refers to a process wherein Old World traditions, cultural perspectives and behavioural markers are transformed and “indigenised” in the New World. To “be creole” is to be distinct from the Old World, that is, to be “local”, whilst retaining shadows of Old World substance made specifically relevant to the New World experience.

---

overarching sense of community. Groups “belong” only to themselves, and, as such, the question of belonging in a shared space is moot. More importantly, however, the models consistently define the West Indies as Afro-Euro space, effectively designating the Chinese as outsiders with a clarity that is missing in the creole model. For example, in his work on pluralism, M.G. Smith uses “West Indian” as an equivalent term for “creole”, which, in turn, he defines as the “combination of European and African traditions” (M.G. Smith, p. 6) He also claims that “creole” describes Blacks, Whites and individuals of mixed African and European heritage in the West Indies. Both Smith and Leo A. Depres essentially ignore the Chinese in their analyses.

The Chinese are equally excluded in the marking out of the West Indies as “plantation space”. Lloyd Best, for example, divides plantation economies into two phases: “the Golden Age”, the period of African slavery and the establishment of the plantations; and “Gall and Wormwood”, the time of decline and collapse of the plantation economy. Although the Chinese originally entered the West Indies as indentured labourers on the plantations, this timeline essentially identifies them as permanent outsiders and aliens to a space that has been established as Afro-European during “the Golden Age”. Best’s work also makes the plantation the only “legitimate space” of the West Indies (in writing of the Maroons for example he states: “Some slaves are bound to run away. These, however, *have no official or legitimate place* in the economy” (Best, p. 318, emphasis added)). This criterion for belonging is also problematic in terms of Chinese belonging, since their experience on the plantations was relatively short. Other examples of how the plantation model “writes out” the Chinese from West Indian space include Sidney W. Mintz’s analogy of the West Indies being the result of Afro-Euro sexual intercourse and George L. Beckford’s description of the plantation economy’s effect on social structure:

White European planters and administrators stood at the top and were separated by a system of caste which placed the black slaves firmly at the bottom. An intermediate group of skilled white people also existed. And among the black people there emerged a group of racial and cultural half-castes resulting from the exploits of white males with black females (Beckford, p. 62).

<sup>28</sup> Percy C. Hintzen, ‘Race and Creole Ethnicity in the Caribbean’, *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture*, ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Glen L. Richards (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers and Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2002), pp. 92 – 110 (p. 92). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.



In *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770 – 1820*, Brathwaite suggests that an important cultural action occurred in Jamaica during the period under his research and implies that the process was continuing to occur at the time of his writing; namely, the adaptation of social and political institutions from Europe and Africa to Jamaica to form the basis of a specifically Jamaican creole culture<sup>29</sup>. This adjustment, according to Brathwaite, was manifested essentially in a two-way process: Euro-creole society's acceptance of their position of dominance in the colony and the stereotyping of Blacks that went along with such positioning; and the adjustment to the conditions of slavery, including its disruptions and distortions of African cultures, and to institutionally sanctioned subservience, on the part of the Afro-creoles.

Brathwaite asserts that creolisation is an intercultural exchange, characterised by continual accommodation to new cultural influences. In creole space, he claims, "nothing is really fixed and monolithic . . . there are infinite possibilities . . . and many ways of asserting identity" (Brathwaite, p. 307). Brathwaite concludes his study by arguing that between 1770 and 1820, a Jamaican national identity was in its embryonic stage and that, in the post-independence period in which he was writing, it

---

<sup>29</sup> Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770 – 1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

Over the last decade, there has also been considerable interest in "creoleness" – that is, "créolité" – in the French Caribbean. For example, in the foundational article, 'In Praise of Creoleness' (*Callaloo*, 13, (1990), 886 – 909), Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant (the "Créolistes") set forth a number of definitions for "creoleness" which are similar to the traditional use of "creole" in the British West Indies including: "*the interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history*" (p. 891); "*an open specificity*" (p. 892); and "*the world diffracted but recomposed*" (p. 892). Similarly, the Créolistes describe the process of creolisation in this manner: "the brutal interaction, on either insular or landlocked territories . . . of culturally different populations . . . *these population are called to invent the new cultural designs allowing for a relative cohabitation between them*" (p. 893). Nevertheless, the scope and focus of créolité as posited by the Créolistes is beyond this paper. For them, créolité is most importantly an art aesthique in which the use of French creole languages is the central component. They believe that it is through French creole that créolité finds its truest expression. As such, créolité will not be included in this discussion of creole and creoleness. (See also Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, Jean Bernabé, Lucien Taylor, 'Créolité Bites' (in conversation), *Transition*, 74 (1997), 124 – 161.)

would come to fruition. He suggests that slave folk culture would have the strongest influence in the developing creole matrix of Jamaica.

Orlando Patterson builds on Brathwaite's work by arguing that there are actually two types of creolisation: "segmentary" and "synthetic". For Patterson, segmentary creolisation is "that process of development in which each group in the new setting, creates its own peculiar version of a local culture"<sup>30</sup>. It is a definition that corresponds to Brathwaite's description of distinct Euro-creole and Afro-creole cultural segments. In fact, Patterson calls his segmentary creolised elements "Euro-West Indian" and "Afro-West Indian". He argues that Euro-West Indian creole culture is substantially European in content and institutional structure, while Afro-West Indian creole culture is identified as the peasant culture of slaves and ex-slaves. Like Brathwaite, Patterson recognises that both segments influence each other, although he notes a power imbalance in this regard in favour of the Euro-West Indian segment.

Patterson's second form of creolisation – synthetic – is defined as the conscious bringing together of elements from the Euro and Afro-West Indian cultures; namely, mixing European institutional components (such as educational, political and legal structures) with Afro-West Indian expressive and symbolic content (such as language, music and dance). Patterson concludes that the "major difference between synthetic and segmentary creolization is that, whereas, in the latter process each group develops its own local culture, with synthetic creolization the group attempts to forge a local culture which combines elements from all the available cultural resources"(Patterson, p. 318). He associates the development of synthetic creolisation explicitly with West Indian middle-class involvement in nationalist movements.

---

<sup>30</sup> Orlando Patterson, 'Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study', *Ethnicity. Theory and Experience*, ed. by Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 303 – 349 (p. 316). Further references to this article are given after the quotation in the text.

## Practical Implications of the Creole Theory

The problem with the creole theory as formulated by Brathwaite and Patterson is that its image of a national community open to new cultural influences, although theoretically attractive, does not fully translate into everyday, substantial practice. Indeed, both Brathwaite and Patterson run into difficulties when they move from theory into practice in their work. For example, Brathwaite specifically defines creolisation as a way of seeing the world, “not in terms of white and black, master and slave, in separate nuclear units”, but as a holistic unit (Brathwaite, p. 307); however, Brathwaite also suggests that this new holistic entity is composed specifically out of two elements – White and Black. There is no place for any other group, besides a mixed White-Black group, within such a concept of creole space. Thus, Brathwaite sets up a practical definition of Jamaican space that is essentially Afro-Euro, excluding the Chinese from viable membership, even though, by the time of his writing, the Jamaican Chinese community was highly visible in their society.

Patterson’s analysis of British West Indian creolisation runs into similar difficulty in his definition of segmentary creolisation. Although he initially states that this is a process by which ethnic groups create their own local cultures, the remainder of his article suggests that there is only one valid local culture – a hybrid Afro-Euro culture. Patterson’s measurement of segmentary creolisation becomes the adjustments ethnic groups make to fit into an Afro-Euro space. Thus, Patterson claims that Jamaican Chinese had only a brief period of segmentary creolisation, identified as the time when second and third generation Jamaican Chinese overtly participated in the Jamaican Afro-Euro culture. Similarly, his definition of synthetic creolisation refers specifically to a synthesis of Afro-Euro elements. Like Brathwaite, Patterson excludes



all the cultural adjustments made by the Chinese to their new environment which were not explicitly linked to an Afro-Euro cultural matrix, or the impact the presence of the Chinese may have had on their “host society” from the process of creolisation. Thus, nineteenth century reports of Chinese participation in the *Tadja* festivals in Guyana or the impact of Chinese gambling games and opium dens on their environments cannot, within Patterson or Brathwaite’s definitions of creolisation, be considered examples of creolisation<sup>31</sup>.

The result of such work is that concepts of creole West Indian nationhood remain popularly understood as an Afro-Euro hybrid space; or as one writer put it, “To be Caribbean, then is to occupy the hierarchical, hybridised, “creole” space between two racial poles” (Hintzen, p. 93). This exclusive understanding of creole and creolisation is strikingly revealed in social science work that has sought to describe the process of creolisation with respect to the Chinese in the West Indies. A comparison of such studies reveals a consistent definition of creolisation, and by

---

<sup>31</sup> The work of Édouard Glissant and Wilson Harris provides a striking contrast to the limited understanding of “creole” demonstrated by Brathwaite and Patterson. In *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (France: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), for example, Glissant’s explores creolisation through the concept of “*chaos-monde*” (“world chaos”). Glissant defines “*chaos-monde*” as a constant state of cultural reconstruction in which all available cultural elements combine to form something totally new, unforeseeable or unpredictable:

. . . le choc, l’intrication, les répulsions, les attirances, les connivences, les oppositions, les conflits entre les cultures des peuples dans la totalité-monde contemporaine . . . il s’agit du mélange culturel, qui n’est pas un simple *melting pot* par lequel la totalité-monde se trouve aujourd’hui réalisé (p. 82)

Glissant rejects the idea of hybridity, that is, the idea of combining merely two cultures that is inherent to Brathwaite and Patterson’s work. Instead, he argues for an understanding of creole as the result of a myriad cross-fertilization of a multitude of cultural elements. In a similar fashion, Wilson Harris locates creoleness within an unfinished and unlimitedly diverse state of being when he argues that it is the “sensation of *unfinished genesis* – in worlds of space and nature and wholeness steeped in the freedom of diversity to cross boundaries that restrict our vision of therapeutic and evolving reality” (“Creoleness: The Crossroads of a Civilization?”, *Caribbean Creolization. Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature and Identity*, ed. by Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al: University Press of Florida and Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998), pp. 23 – 35 (p. 27). This theme is explored throughout Harris’ fiction and essays. (See also Harris’ *The Guyana Quartet* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1985) and Glissant’s *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (trans. by J. Michael Dash, Virginia: The University of Virginia, Caraf Books Series, 1989) and *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).)



extension, the ability of the Chinese “to belong” in the West Indies, as a process in which the Chinese assimilate Afro-Euro values and norms. This understanding of creolisation reveals that, overall, the Chinese remain ambiguously located in West Indian space for although the creole theory affirms their belonging, in practice, the performance of creole space excludes them.<sup>32</sup>

## The Chinese in Jamaica

According to many social scientists, the Chinese community in Jamaica is particularly distinct from similar communities in Guyana and Trinidad in that it has

---

<sup>32</sup> The ensuing discussion is based primarily on the following studies of the Chinese in the British West Indies: Leonard Broom, ‘The Social Differentiation of Jamaica’, *American Sociological Review*, 19(2) (1954), 115 – 125; Patrick Bryan, ‘The Creolization of the Chinese Community in Jamaica’, *Ethnic Minorities in Caribbean Society*, ed. by Rhoda E. Reddock (St. Augustine: The University of the West Indies, 1996), pp. 173 – 271; Carlisle Chang, ‘Chinese in Trinidad Carnival’, *The Drama Review*, 42(3) (1998), 213 – 219; Cecil Clementi, *The Chinese in Guyana* (Guyana: The “Argosy” Company Limited, 1915); Laura Hall, *The Chinese in Guyana: The Making of a Creole Community*, unpublished thesis, University of California at Berkeley, submitted in 1995; B.W. Higman, ‘The Chinese in Trinidad, 1806 – 1838’, *Caribbean Studies*, 12(3) (1972), 21 – 44; Christine Ho, ‘Creolization of the Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica’, *Caribbean Asians: Chinese, Indian and Japanese Experiences in Trinidad and the Dominican Republic*, ed. by Roger Sanjek (New York: New York: Asian/American Center at Queens College, CUNY, 1990), pp. 31 – 61 and ‘Hold the Chow Mein, Gimme Soca’: Creolization of the Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad and Jamaica’, *Amerasia*, 15(2) (1989), 3 – 25; Howard Johnson, ‘The Chinese in Trinidad in the Late Nineteenth Century’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 10(1) (1987), 82 – 95 and ‘The Anti-Chinese Riots of 1918 in Jamaica’, *Caribbean Quarterly* 28(3) (1993), pp. 50 – 62; Margery Kirkpatrick, *From the Middle Kingdom to the New World. Aspects of the Chinese Experience in Migration to Guyana*, vol. 1, (Georgetown: Margery Kirkpatrick, 1993); Marlene Kwok Crawford, *Scenes from the History of the Chinese in Guyana* (Georgetown: Marlene Kwok Crawford, 1989); Andrew W. Lind, ‘Adjustment Patterns Among the Jamaican Chinese’, *Social and Economic Studies* 7(2) (1958), 144 – 164; Walton Look Lai, ‘Chinese Indentured Labor Migrations to the British West Indies in the Nineteenth Century’, *Caribbean Asians: Chinese, Indian and Japanese Experiences in Trinidad and the Dominican Republic*, op. cit., pp. 3 – 30 and *The Chinese in the West Indies, 1806 – 1995. A Documentary History* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998); H. Lynch-Campbell, *Chinese in Jamaica* (Kingston: City Printery Ltd., 1957); Roy Dereck McCree, ‘The Chinese Game of Whe Whe in Trinidad: From Criminalisation to Normalisation’, *Caribbean Quarterly*, 42(2) (1996), 1 – 28; Trevor Millett, ‘The Chinese Community in Trinidad and Tobago: A Case Study of a Commercial Ethnic Minority’, *Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean*, ed. by Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St Augustine: The University of the West Indies, 1994), pp. 177 – 202 and *The Chinese in Trinidad* (Port of Spain: Inprint Caribbean Limited, 1993); Brian L. Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism. Colonial Guyana 1838 – 1900* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, and Montreal, Kingston, et al.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995) and *Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society. Guyana After Slavery, 1838 – 1891* (Philadelphia, Reading, et al.: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers); Orlando Patterson, op. cit.; Thomas A. Shaw, ‘To Be or Not to Be Chinese: Differential Expressions of Chinese Culture and Solidarity in the British West Indies’, *Caribbean Ethnicity Revisited*, ed. by Stephen Glazier (New York, London, et al.: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1985), pp. 71 – 185; Lee

been generally perceived as being closed, self-contained and slow to creolise, and in the open hostility demonstrated towards it by the “host society”. This understanding of the Jamaican Chinese experience is linked to their unique immigration and subsequent settlement patterns.

Unlike Guyana and Trinidad, the planters in Jamaica did not appear to feel the same sense of pressure to obtain labourers after slave emancipation. In fact, between 1850 and 1866, the high point of nineteenth century Chinese immigration to the West Indies, only three boats of Chinese labourers arrived in Jamaica, all in 1854. In total, the ships carried less than 500 Chinese. It was not until 1884, with the arrival of 680 indentured labourers, that the Chinese began to make their presence felt<sup>33</sup>.

Significantly, the 1884 immigrants, who were to form the basis of the Jamaican Chinese community, were predominantly Hakka; and, since post-1884 Chinese immigration was sponsored by individuals rather than the government, the Jamaican Chinese community retained a predominantly Hakka character<sup>34</sup>. This fact is important for two main reasons: first, it meant that the Chinese community in Jamaica was largely a cohesive cultural group as compared to their contemporaries elsewhere in the West Indies; second, the Hakka's experience of discrimination and persecution in China may have made them more concerned with preserving their ethnic identity than other Chinese migrants<sup>35</sup>.

---

Tom Yin, *The Chinese in Jamaica*, (Kingston: Mr. Lee Tom Yin, 1957). Further references to these works are given after quotation in the text.

<sup>33</sup> Lee Tom Yin and Christine Ho suggest that earlier groups of Chinese arrived in Jamaica in 1864 and 1870.

<sup>34</sup> “Hakka” (loosely translated as “guest people”) refers both to a Chinese ethnic group and its language. Traditionally from the northern provinces, they migrated to southern China, to areas inhabited by Cantonese (“Punti”). The Hakka were not assimilated into the Cantonese population; indeed, the history of Hakka-Punti relations in nineteenth century China is marked by violence, not the least of which was the Taiping Revolution, in which Hakka played leading roles (see Chapter three, p. 80).

<sup>35</sup> In ‘Light in the Shop’ (*Small Axe*, 2 (1997), 103 – 108), Victor Chang gives some insight into the Hakka sense of ethnic exclusivity when he comments that “the Hakka term for all other races, black, brown and white, is ‘spirits’ or ‘ghosts’, not people” (p. 106).



Certainly, the Chinese community in Jamaica appear to be much more organised in terms of a self-contained ethnic group than those in Trinidad and Guyana. As early as 1891, the Chinese Benevolent Association (sometimes referred to as the Chinese Benevolent Society) was established for the express purpose of doing charitable work amongst the Chinese in Jamaica. Although the Association had a brief defunct period, by the 1920s it was responsible for a Chinese Public School, a press, sanatorium and alms house, an old age home and a cemetery<sup>36</sup>. Other Chinese groups and associations in Jamaica established by the mid-twentieth century included business and recreational associations, like the Chinese Retailers Association and the Chinese Athletic Club. Various publications in the Chinese language were also in existence.

Although these activities clearly demonstrate an adjustment or “indiginisation” of Chinese culture to its Jamaican environment, researchers do not consider this as evidence of creolisation. Patterson, for example, describes such activities as “ethnic consolidation” rather than segmentary creolisation (Patterson, p. 329). Instead, the establishment of the Euro-styled Chinese Athletic Club in 1938, where members participated in sports like cricket, badminton and tennis, or the Chinese Public school, which taught a regular curriculum in addition to the one-hour instruction in Chinese language, are Patterson’s evidence of segmentary creolisation. Similarly, Patterson suggests that the Jamaican Chinese were only drawn into the process of synthetic creolisation because of a complex intersection of factors, including: the westernised, middle-class orientation of the younger generation; the desire for self-preservation in terms of nationalist activity; and, the importance placed on interethnic harmony in nationalist discourse. Thus, activities that would fall within Patterson’s definition of

---

<sup>36</sup> According to Lee Tom Yin, between 1904 and 1916, the Association was under the control

synthetic creolisation include an attempt by some members of the Chinese Retailers Association to change its name to the Jamaica Retailers Association and the Chinese community's contribution of a traditional Dragon Dance to Jamaica's first national festival<sup>37</sup>. Indeed, the major difference between segmentary and synthetic creolisation for Patterson is that synthetic creolisation officially acknowledges an impact of the Chinese on a space which is, nonetheless, still identified as Afro-Euro.

Most of the studies on Jamaican Chinese creolisation argue that the Jamaican Chinese avoided creolisation, that is, becoming Afro-Euro "indiginised", because it enabled them to solidify control of the Jamaican retail trade. Such research argues that emancipation created a more complex economy with a pressing need for a retail system; however, the Coloured and White middle and upper-classes, the only groups with the resources and education to do so, were uninterested in filling this niche because it would entail serving the ex-slaves. This left an opening for an outsider group to fill this economic gap. Thomas Shaw's analysis is typical of this vein of thought:

The Chinese quickly dominated a sector of the economy for which their ethnicity was an asset . . . a white man in the retail system serving a black ex-slave was unthinkable and for a colored gentleman the position was also unappealing because of the social distance which coloreds tried so desperately to maintain between themselves and the black masses. The Chinese, therefore, were ideal candidates for retailing since they could take advantage of the fact that *they were 'strangers' on the scene* and were not, as I have mentioned, driven by either the passion for emulation of the 'white' ideal or by contempt for the black masses which so strongly influenced the colored middle classes. (Shaw, p. 178, emphasis added)

---

of a gangster named Lim Biang. In response, the majority of the Jamaican Chinese seem to have withdrawn their support from the Association (see pp. 27 – 28).

<sup>37</sup> The motion to change the name of the Chinese Retailers Association was defeated because some members feared the loss of assets and reserves, and because they felt that language would become an issue. This latter reason is particularly interesting since the Association had already accommodated its non-Chinese speaking members by having both an English-speaking and a Chinese-speaking Secretary (see Lynch Campbell, p. 41).



It remained to their advantage to be defined and to define themselves as 'strangers' until in the 1930s and 40s their position as 'outsiders' became increasingly resented by members of the socially conscious middle class who undertook to 'Jamaicanize Jamaicans' as well as by the militant working class who sought greater self-sufficiency and full employment (ibid., p. 179).

Social scientists have good reasons for concluding that the Chinese were perceived as outsiders in Jamaica. For example, by the early twentieth century, Jamaican newspapers were describing the Chinese participation in the retail sector as a "Chinese invasion"<sup>38</sup>. In 1930, a Native Defenders Committee was established in Jamaica with a mandate to protect "native Jamaican" businesses against foreigners in general, although the obvious focus of its hostility was Chinese businesspeople. Resentment towards the Jamaican Chinese is also evident in a series of riots directed at Chinese-owned enterprises that occurred in 1918, 1938 and 1965, and was identified as the impetus behind the numerous incidents of theft, arson and murder that plagued Chinese businesspeople, especially in the early twentieth century. Indeed, in 1928, the situation was bad enough for the Chinese Benevolent Association to lodge a complaint with the Nanking Overseas Affairs Commission about the discrimination and violence they faced at the hands of the "native Jamaicans" (Lee Tom Yin, p. 15)<sup>39</sup>.

What such work creates, however, is a definition of Jamaica as non-Chinese space; for if, as these studies indicate, the economic success of the Chinese community as a whole was tied up with their outsider and alien status, then, Jamaica must be understood to be non-Chinese. A distinction must be made between the

---

<sup>38</sup> Recounted in Major B.F. Caws 'The Chinese in Jamaica', *The Chinese in the Caribbean*, (Kingston: 1941), as excerpted in Walton Look Lai's *The Chinese in the West Indies 1806 – 1995. A Documentary History*, p. 244.

<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising that the complaint was made to Nanking rather than to Jamaican officials. The Jamaican government had already displayed an unsympathetic attitude towards the Jamaican Chinese by passing legislation aimed at restricting the ability of the Chinese to enter Jamaica in 1919 (they would tighten these restrictions in 1931 and again in 1940). Indeed, a dramatic display of

Chinese and the “native Jamaicans” by establishing business – the shop counter – as the boundary designating insider/outsider status. Little space remains for Chinese participation in West Indian space other than as an economic “middlemen minority”; and, in general, middlemen minorities are perceived by their host society to be parasites and economic enemies<sup>40</sup>.

Fanon recognises the danger of vilifying economic middlemen during periods of nationalism and independence movements and blamed such attitudes on an under-developed middle-class: “To them, nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period”<sup>41</sup>. In the pursuit of these advantages a boundary between insider and outsider is established. If the trader can be identified as an outsider, then the hostility demonstrated towards him or her can be justified on the grounds that he or she is interloping. Such an exclusion of the Chinese is strikingly revealed in an article entitled ‘Occidental Chinese Wall’ which appeared in Jamaica in 1952:

The rest of Jamaicans are beginning to look at the Chinese wall. And it is not a friendly look . . . if the Chinese keep piling up wealth and hate behind that wall, giving back nothing to the community, they may find it expedient to go back ‘home’ sooner than they hope . . . They hate Negroes more than all . . . [they] take full advantage of all facilities the community offers, yet such facilities as they have as a group are reserved for Chinese only . . . Few Chinese even bother to vote . . .

---

official hostility towards Chinese immigration occurred in 1922 when Jamaican officials boarded a ship from Hong Kong demanding that the would-be immigrants pay the £30 “entrance fee” or be sent back.

<sup>40</sup> Middlemen minorities traditionally develop from immigrant groups who, during the period of their initial immigration, consider themselves to be transitory members of their “host society”, intending merely to work for a short time before returning to their homelands with their earnings. As a result, they tend to concentrate in, and eventually dominate, occupations that are financially liquid, such as trade. Their business practices also reflect their sense of impermanence. For example, they typically work long hours, emphasise the accumulation of savings, and tend to use employees who will not be a drain on the business’ profits (mostly family members and other kin). The result of such practices and attitudes is the creation of communities that are highly organised, demonstrate strong communal solidarity and hold significant economic clout – qualities that often put them at odds with their host society, particularly in environments where there is strong competition over limited economic resources. For further reading, see Edna Bonacich, ‘A Theory of Middlemen Minorities’, *American Sociological Review*, 38(5) (1973), 583 – 594 and Walter Zenner, ‘Middlemen Minorities’, *Ethnicity*, op. cit., pp. 179 – 186.

<sup>41</sup> Frantz Fanon, ‘The Pitfalls of National Consciousness’, *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 122. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

Political control of Jamaica will ever remain in the hands of Negroes. Since it is too late to bar all Chinese – as some other Caribbean countries have done – it is not too late to enact the kind of legislation which will force the Chinese out from behind the wall<sup>42</sup>.

Three years later, another newspaper article argued that Jamaican Chinese should stop celebrating Chinese New Year on the grounds that it emphasised “their difference from the rest of *us*” and that emphasising such difference was unwise:

. . . it makes them an easy target. All sensible Jamaicans of Chinese origin already know that their industry and ingenuity, which have brought them as a group remarkable success, tend to make them victims of group attacks. *All successful minorities tend to become unpopular, as the Jews have found through history.* It seems therefore, nothing more than ordinary prudence for minority groups not to emphasize with great noise their difference and distinctiveness<sup>43</sup>.

What the articles have in common, is the use of business activities to polarise the Chinese (“them”) against Jamaicans (“us”). Thus, if Jamaican space is creole space, as proponents of the creole theory insist, then the Jamaican Chinese cannot be creole because their business interests identify them as outsiders to this space. Creoleness is reduced to Afro-Euro status in much the same manner in which Patterson’s practical rendering of segmentary creolisation identifies it as a process of “Afro-Euro-nisation”. As such, the significant gap between the theoretical understanding of creole space as open to all cultural influences, and the restriction of that space to an Afro-Euro matrix in practice is revealed in the continual positioning of Jamaican Chinese as uncreolised.

---

<sup>42</sup> These excerpts from the article, ‘Occidental Chinese Wall’, *Spotlight*, October 1952, pp. 4 & 7, are reproduced in Broom, p. 123 and Lind, pp. 162 and 163.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Squibs’, *Star*, 12 February 1955, reproduced in Lynch-Campbell, p. 107.



## The Chinese in Trinidad

It has been suggested that if the Chinese communities in the British West Indies were located along a creole spectrum, the Jamaican Chinese would be at the end representing an uncreolised state, the Chinese of Guyana would be at the opposite extreme, and the Trinidadian Chinese would be located somewhere in the middle. But this positioning of the Trinidadian Chinese does not free the definition of creole from the Afro-Euro associations that exclude the Chinese from belonging in West Indian spaces. Instead, in the case of Trinidad, Chinese creolisation is identified as a process through which the Chinese fit themselves into Afro-Euro Trinidadian space.

The 1806 migration of Chinese indentured labourers to Trinidad set patterns for how subsequent relations between the Chinese and the Afro-Trinidadians would be represented. In this regard, the early establishment of Chinese-Afro sexual liaisons and the introduction of mixed Afro-Chinese individuals into the Trinidadian population have a great significance. Some of the 1806 Chinese immigrants (all male) established sexual relations with slave women in a highly visible manner. Indeed, it has been claimed that these men regularly bought the freedom of those slave women who became pregnant with their children so that the children would not be born into slavery. Herein lies the root of one of the most striking differences between the Chinese of Jamaica and Trinidad; namely, the Trinidadian Chinese's apparent willingness to marry Afro-Trinidadians and openly maintain families with them<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>44</sup> As early as the 1860s, marriages were being noted between Chinese men and Trinidadian Afro-creole women (see for example, the excerpt from W.H. Gamble, *Trinidad, Historical and Descriptive: A Narrative of Nine Years' Residence in the Island* (London: 1866) in Walton Look Lai, *The Chinese in the West Indies*, p. 211) and by 1878, it was suggested that the contentment of the Chinese in Trinidad was due largely to the "readiness with which he finds a helpmate in the Creole woman" (quoted in Howard Johnson, 'The Chinese in Trinidad in the Late Nineteenth Century', p. 89). In contrast, as late as 1957, a Jamaican writer complained of the reticence of the Jamaican Chinese to intermarry with Afro-Jamaicans, although they were not adverse to having sexual liaisons with them (H. Lynch-Campbell, p. 31).



The Afro-Chinese Trinidadians born of such unions were accepted as members within the Afro-Euro Trinidadian social context at a very early stage. For example, one observer noted that the descendants of the 1806 Chinese immigrants and the slave women were considered “a part of the people of Trinidad”<sup>45</sup>. In contrast, Afro-Chinese Jamaicans, particularly the sons, were routinely “Sinicised”, that is sent to China at a young age to learn their ancestral culture and language<sup>46</sup>. This practice, so integral to their acceptance in the Jamaican Chinese community, also meant that they were distanced from Afro and Euro-Jamaicans<sup>47</sup>. Undoubtedly, such links also existed between the Trinidadian Chinese and China. In fact, the colonial government was concerned enough to pass laws during the Boxer Rebellion aimed at preventing Trinidadian Chinese from providing military support to the Chinese in mainland China<sup>48</sup>. Nevertheless, from an early period, Afro-Chinese Trinidadians were recognised as valid members in the greater community.

Another factor contributing to social scientists’ assertions that the Trinidadian Chinese were creolised was their rapid assimilation of Afro-Euro Trinidadian norms and values. For example, numerous nineteenth century reports focus on the apparent ease with which the Chinese adopted westernized dress and Christianity. Such behaviour is often contrasted with the indentured labourers from India. One writer

---

<sup>45</sup> E.L. Joseph, *History of Trinidad* (London: 1838), as excerpted in Walton Look Lai, *The Chinese in the West Indies*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> See Patterson, p. 329. This was also the practice in my family where my uncle, at around the age of five, was sent to family in China. He would not return until he was in his late twenties. My father was also supposed to be sent to China at a later stage, but his mother refused. Victor Chang also indicated that his family had originally planned to send him to China as well (conversation, 12 July 2002). It is interesting to note that my uncle recalls about ten other children making the journey from Jamaica to China when he left (see Appendix E, p. ix).

<sup>47</sup> In this regard, it is interesting to note the different attitudes towards the Jamaican Chinese community demonstrated by my father and his sisters, none of whom were ever sent to China, and my uncle. My father and aunts do not consider themselves particularly “Chinese” and were never very involved in the Jamaican Chinese community either in Jamaica or, once migrating, in the Jamaican Chinese diaspora. In contrast, upon my uncle’s return to Jamaica, he was, to a great extent, absorbed into the Jamaican Chinese community separate and apart from the general Jamaican population (see Appendix E, p. ix).

suggested that the Chinese were more valuable immigrants than the Indians specifically because of their willingness to adopt European styles, manners and language. Other factors used to represent the Indian immigrants as uncreolised were their reticence to marry Afro-Trinidadians (or as one nineteenth century immigrant reportedly put it: "Chinchin man too much creole mamma likum, coollieman no likum creole mamma"(Johnson, 'Chinese in Trinidad' p. 89)) or to convert to Christianity.

Class divisions and a cultural and social distance between the local and home-born Chinese are also provided as evidence of creolisation in that they are understood to reveal the depth to which Trinidadian Chinese had become absorbed into the greater Afro-Euro Trinidadian community. In her discussion of the Chinese Associations in Trinidad, for example, Christine Ho notes that they catered specifically to various segments of the Trinidadian Chinese community. Among her examples, she points to the China Society, whose members consisted of long established, prosperous businessmen and professionals, and to the Hakka Fui Toong Association, which served the needs of new Hakka immigrants. Ho, who is trying to show that the local-born Trinidadian Chinese are more creolised than either the home-born Chinese or the Jamaican Chinese for that matter, takes care to provide this description of the China Society:

The official purpose of the group was to keep alive Chinese traditions. However, the food served at meetings held in each other's homes was usually western and few members were able to speak Chinese. Conversations reflected the upper class status of the members, revolving around topics like horsebreeding, foreign travel, marriage, and sending children to top universities in Britain or North America. (Ho, 'Creolization of the Chinese', p. 42)

---

<sup>48</sup> The Boxer Rebellion occurred in China in 1900. Its aim was to rid China of foreigners, particularly, Europeans, Americans and Japanese (see chapter three, p. 80).

The implication is that because the members of the China Society are westernised, they are creolised; thus, the new Hakka immigrants, who retained their traditional language and cultural practices, are said to be the least creolised elements of the Trinidadian Chinese community. Once again, in practice, creolisation becomes defined as a process of westernisation within an Afro-Euro context.

Another aspect of the Trinidadian Chinese community that is often presented as proof of creolisation is the fact that they did not monopolise the trade sector of Trinidad's economy. For example, Johnson's conclusion that the Trinidadian Chinese were highly creolised is based on the lack of violence and hostility demonstrated towards them by their "host society" – a reality which he attributes directly to their lack of trade monopoly. Certainly, there is a long tradition of portraying the retail sector in Trinidad as a shared space of competition between the Indo-Trinidadians, Portuguese and Chinese. In the 1800s, for example, when a complaint was made that "we see *them* [Chinese and Indians] monopolizing many of the minor branches of traders", the Chinese were not singled out (Johnson, p. 86, 'Chinese in Trinidad', emphasis added). Similarly, a twentieth century writer provided a colourful description of the retail situation in Trinidad that captured this sense of a shared space when he wrote:

Sing How Can keeps a provisions shop next to Diogenese Brathwaite's "Rum Parlour", flanked on the other side by Rahman Singh, the barber who in his turn is shut in by the leather sandal factory of Pedito Vialva<sup>49</sup>.

The claim to Chinese creolisation on the basis of economic dispersion is founded at least partially on that idea that such a dispersal meant that the Chinese were not a self-contained community; however, by making participation in Afro-Euro space the



marker of creolisation, “creole” is once again linked to an Afro-Euro status<sup>50</sup>. In Guyana, this understanding of creole is even more extreme; for here, the claim is made for Chinese creolisation on the basis of the disappearance of Chinese cultural traits.

## The Chinese in Guyana

Chinese indentured immigration to Guyana began in 1853 and during the high period of nineteenth century Chinese immigration, Guyana was the site of the largest influx of Chinese. Yet, by the early twentieth century, their numbers had been

---

<sup>49</sup> Harry A. Franck, *Roaming Through the West Indies* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1920), p. 384.

<sup>50</sup> Unlike Jamaica, where creolisation is essentially presented as an Afro-Euro experience, the studies on the Trinidadian Chinese do inadvertently suggest that the theoretical concept of creole as an open space of cultural exchange does have some practical relevancy for Trinidadians. This is revealed by the recognition of Chinese input on a national level, including their comparatively high profile participation in politics and in Carnival. For example, Dr. Tito Achong was the mayor of Port of Spain during the 1940s, an important period in terms of agitation for universal franchise, and the first local Governor General was Sir Solomon Hochoy. There has also been a consistent presence of Trinidadian Chinese bandleaders and costume designers involved in Carnival from as early as 1927. In fact, the first Band of the Year Award, was awarded to a Chinese Trinidadian bandleader. Significantly, although until the mid-1950s, the Chinese bands largely reflected the folklore of Afro-Trinidadians, these representations eventually gave way to more expressions drawn from the Chinese cultural matrix. This included a 1967 band under the theme “China: The Forbidden City” that introduced Chinese drumming for the first time (Carlisle Chang, ‘Chinese in Trinidad Carnival’, *The Drama Review*, 42(3) (1998), 213 – 219 (p. 218). Interestingly, the *tassa* drum made its first appearance in Carnival the following year.)

Although none of these studies comment on this, it may be that the seeming ability to extend the practical production of creoleness to include the impact of the Chinese presence as a factor of creolisation in Trinidad can be partially attributed to the long tradition of imagining Trinidad as a space of multiethnic mutual influence – “as cosmopolitan”. For example, Trinidad became a British colony in 1797, extremely late in comparison to Jamaica, a colony since the seventeenth century. Trinidad also retained strong influences from Spain, its previous coloniser, and from an elite French segment of society. It could very well be that because a certain freedom from the absolute dominance of English culture and language existed in Trinidad, as well as the presence of large and established Coloured and French communities, there may have been a predisposition for imagining somewhat looser ways of belonging within Trinidadian space which might very well have contributed to an easier acceptance of the Chinese presence in Trinidad.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that validation of the Chinese influence in Trinidad is limited; that is, that it is generally celebrated only as part of a narrative of Trinidadian cosmopolitanism. A certain amount of value is placed on the Chinese as an exotic “other”; however, this value is contained within a discourse which suggests that the Chinese make minor contributions to what remains an essentially Afro-Euro cultural space. In general, as these studies have shown, creolisation remains largely measured by how successfully the Chinese assimilated to Afro-Euro Trinidadian culture. They do not, for example, identify how Chinese cultural traditions were adapted to survive in Trinidad or how other Trinidadians were affected by the presence of the Chinese as sites of creolisation.

severely reduced<sup>51</sup>. This striking reduction of numbers and the relationship of the Chinese to the general Guianese population in light of the political division along racial lines that occurred in Guyana in the mid-twentieth century, have long been of interest to social scientists concerned with the creolisation of the Guianese Chinese.

Beginning with Morton Fried's influential 1950s study, there has been a fairly well-established tradition of considering the Chinese of Guyana to be the most creolised Chinese community in the British West Indies. In support of this position, Fried points to the following missing elements in Guianese Chinese life: active Chinese associations and organisations; ties to China, use of language (including lack of Chinese newspapers); and Chinese cultural traditions, particularly amongst the local-born Chinese who made up the majority of the population. Fried concludes that there was nothing particularly "Chinese" about the Chinese in Guyana in terms of lifestyle, values and cultural norms. (He did make a distinction between local and home-born Chinese on the grounds that the home-born Chinese retained ties to China; however, Fried suggests that they would eventually be absorbed into the local-born community.)

Suggestions of this seemingly quick adoption of the Afro-Euro Guianese lifestyle were also evident in the nineteenth century. As in Trinidad, a number of government reports and documents make specific note of Chinese acculturation by commenting that the Chinese were wearing European-style attire and participating in Christian worship services. Indeed, the Chinese of Guyana have been considered particularly distinct – and particularly creolised – amongst the Chinese communities within the West Indies because of their extensive and early involvement in Christianity.

---

<sup>51</sup> For example, Cecil Clementi reports that although over 15,000 Chinese had migrated to

Shaw points out that mass conversion of the Chinese population in Guyana occurred 40 years before that of the Chinese in Jamaica. As in Trinidad, the Chinese of Guyana may have had a predisposition towards conversion since many of them had already been exposed to Christianity<sup>52</sup>. In fact, in 1860, both the *Dora* and the *Whirlwind* carried congregations of Chinese Christians to Guyana, some of whom reportedly held daily worship services throughout the trip. By 1864, the Chinese community of Guyana had their own government appointed missionary, Wu Tai Kim, to serve their spiritual needs<sup>53</sup>. The following year, Hopetown, specifically proposed to be a “village of Christian Chinese”, was established. Ten years later, the Chinese community opened St. Saviour’s Anglican Church in Georgetown (Shaw, 164).

The Chinese community’s large-scale conversion to Christianity cannot solely be accounted for on the basis of prior contact with Christianity. In her unpublished thesis, Laura Hall makes a convincing argument that Christianity was adopted by the Chinese in Guyana because it facilitated their upwardly mobile ambitions. Nevertheless, Christianity remains one of the most common evidence given to support the idea of a high level of creolisation amongst the Guianese Chinese.

Chinese intermarriage with other Guianese is also identified as evidence of creolisation. Writing in the early twentieth century, Henry Kirke, former magistrate of Guyana, suggests that there was a gradual acceptance of such liaisons on the part of both Blacks and the Chinese. According to Kirke, prior to the 1870s, Afro-creole women were reluctant to enter into relationships with Chinese men; however, as the Chinese left the plantations and became established in other occupations, they were

---

Guyana beginning in the nineteenth century, only 2, 622 remained in the colony by 1911 (Clementi, p. 1).

<sup>52</sup> For example, a Christian missionary in China, Reverend Lobschied, was highly involved in recruiting Chinese to the British West Indies. He eventually visited the Chinese in the British West Indies in the early 1860s.

<sup>53</sup> Wu is sometimes referred to as “O Tye Kim”.



deemed more attractive. So commonplace were these liaisons by the time he became magistrate, that Kirke could claim that Chinese shopkeepers always had a Coloured “concubine” and that “they generally manage to get the best looking girls in the place”; and, by the 1940s and 50s, many of the Chinese in Guyana acknowledged a mixed ancestry<sup>54</sup>.

Particularly important in the use of marriage as an indicator of creolisation was the fact that quite early, Guianese Chinese women also married “out” of their ethnic group. For example, Margery Kirkpatrick’s collection of personal stories about early Chinese women settlers to Guyana, includes the tale of Mary Wong. Wong, herself the product of a Madrassi mother and a Chinese father, was credited with having had a particular influence in the Chinese community because of her comparatively relaxed attitude towards marriage; namely, she allowed her daughters to be involved in the process of choosing their husbands. Kirkpatrick argues that Wong’s behaviour so influenced the Chinese community that it led to a number of other women choosing their own husbands and provides a list of couples whose “love-matches” were apparently inspired by Wong. This list identifies a number of marriages between Chinese women and men without Chinese surnames. Indeed, it has also been reported that the local-born Chinese women of Guyana, as with their counterparts in Trinidad, showed a great reluctance to marry home-born Chinese on the grounds that there were too many significant cultural differences between the two groups. Again, these differences are pointed to as evidence of creolisation.

As with Trinidad, the wide dispersal of the Chinese in Guyana into Afro-Euro space is also understood to be a measure of creolisation. Thus, researchers draw attention to the lack of a “real” Chinatown in Guyana and the participation of the

---

<sup>54</sup> Henry Kirke, *Twenty-Five Years in Guyana* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company,

Chinese in a wide variety of occupations as further evidence of creolisation<sup>55</sup>. In particular, it is often noted that due to the lack of viable occupational options open to them, the Chinese spent a longer time as indentured labourers than their contemporaries in Jamaica and Trinidad. It is often claimed that this experience impeded the ability or the desire of the Chinese to effect ethnic consolidation and laid the groundwork for creole interchange between the Chinese and other Guianese<sup>56</sup>. Finally, the few social organisations, outside of the Church, which served the needs of the Guianese Chinese, such as the Chinese Freemasons and the Chinese Sports Club, lacked a real adherence to traditional Chinese cultural. For example, the Chinese Freemasons' lodge, established after some Guianese Chinese were denied membership to the Freemasons lodge that was patronised by British colonials, was patterned after the colonial model<sup>57</sup>. Thus, as with the Chinese of the other regions in the British West Indies, the creolisation of the Chinese in Guyana is perceived as being directly related to their absorption into a cultural matrix other than their own.

What these studies on Chinese creolisation have in common, is the assumption that to be creole within the West Indies is to be of African and/or European descent. Indeed, the definition of creole underpinning such studies has been explicitly stated as: "a *local* culture that combines primarily elements from Europe and Africa" or "the

---

1898), p. 216; Hall, p. 118.

<sup>55</sup> During a brief period, usually deemed as the 1880s to 1913, a number of Chinese businesses were established along Lombard Street in Georgetown; however researchers have claimed that this was not a traditional ethnic enclave, noting that members of other ethnic groups also owned businesses there. Lombard Street was destroyed by a catastrophic explosion and fire in 1913, which, it has been suggested, encouraged the Chinese to branch out in various occupations and locations. It has also been argued that the early Portuguese domination of the retail sector also contributed to members of the Chinese community becoming involved in a broad scope of economic activities.

<sup>56</sup> In this regard, Kirkpatrick records the story of a friendship between a Chinese man, Lee and an East Indian man, both members of the same weeding gang. Apparently, the two men developed such a close relationship that the East Indian man "loaned" the Chinese man his wife to ensure that Lee would have a child to carry on his name (Kirkpatrick, pp. 155 – 156).

social and cultural interactions between the numerically dominant Afro-Jamaican population and the Euro-Jamaican minority” (Ho, ‘Hold the Chow Mein’, p. 3; Bryan, ‘Creolization of the Chinese’, p. 173). Herein lies the fundamental ambiguity of the creole theory: it theoretically celebrates fluid and changeable identities affected by a limitless number of cultures, but when put into practice, as these studies demonstrate, creolisation rarely facilitates such an expansive understanding of inclusion and mutual influence. For “the most part, the indigenous and diasporic communities with cultural and racial origins outside Africa and Europe remain, in representation and practice, outside Creole reality” (Hintzen, p. 99). By so doing, the creole model theory around which British West Indian nationhood has been so often imagined actually sets up a tension between a concept of open nation space and the actual performance of the boundaries of this space.

## **Performing Nation: Symbols and Narratives**

Gordon Rohlehr defines the performance of national identities as “the active measures . . . to translate watchwords and nationalist slogans into lived cultural reality, to grow flesh and solid body on the skeleton of ideas and ideals”<sup>58</sup>. One of the most basic ways in which national culture is performed is to establish official symbols and rhetoric in which the character of the nation is deemed to be expressed. In the British West Indies, however, the ambiguity of belonging in terms of the Chinese is also revealed in these very symbols and language. In this sense, the official performance of nation as an inclusive community becomes a series of missteps, hesitations and stumbles.

---

<sup>57</sup> Indeed, according to an interview conducted by Kwok Crawford, while denying the Chinese applicants membership, the British colonials praised the Chinese “for thinking ‘British’” (Kwok Crawford, p. 67).



## The Nation Symbolised

The symbolic rendering of the nation transforms “nationhood” from an intangible idea to an effective performance. National symbols act in a two-fold manner: they help identify the community defined as the nation, and they help socialise the individuals therein to recognise how, as members of the nation, they are expected to perceive the world and their place in it. The devices used to symbolise nationhood, such as national anthems and flags, established in Europe with the rise of the first modern nations, were specifically designed to foster loyalty and to assert the legitimacy of the new cultural-political organisation through repetition and ritual.

As Eric Hobsbawm suggests in ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, the symbolic rendering of community inherent within the idea of nation gains its emotive impact from the sense of continuity with the past that it implies. Historic experiences are invested with relevance by linking them to the political needs and aspirations of the present and future through symbols of this past. These early symbols were built around social and cultural markers traditionally associated with a particular ethnic group. For example, shared ancestry was certainly implied in the figures chosen to represent these early nations, such as Marianne in France, John Bull in England, or Uncle Sam in the United States. These figures literally showed how members of the nation looked. These early attempts to encourage identification with the nation were so effective that by the end of the nineteenth century, one observer confidently declared that national emblems encompass “the entire background, thought and culture of a nation” (Hobsbawm, ‘Inventing Tradition’, p. 11). National symbols can thus be said to be the practical performance of ideas of nationhood and as such, are

---

<sup>58</sup> Gordon Rohlehr, ‘The Culture of Williams. Context, Performance and Legacy’, *Callaloo*, 20(4) (1998), 849 – 888 (p. 849).

particularly vulnerable to revealing the inherent tension regarding belonging at the heart of nation.

In the British West Indies, nationalists looked to symbols and ceremonies as a means of giving credibility to their newly independent political states (see Appendix A, p. i). As with all national emblems, these symbols were designed to establish belonging by defining “who we are” against “who we are not”. British West Indian nationalists commonly defined “who we are not” explicitly against the colonial power; but, the task of defining “who we are” was much more difficult, not the least because of the complex population mix and the rigid social organisation that the colonial system had created.

As has been shown earlier, the idea of a creole community became an important theoretical means of addressing the perceived social and cultural fragmentation of the British West Indies. Indeed, for the most part, the official national symbols produced by the state construct a vague and generic representation of community that was based on a broad definition of “creole”. However, as will become apparent, when such symbols are put into practice, their performance often indicates a prioritisation of an Afro-Euro cultural matrix within West Indian space that ignores the Chinese presence in its representation of nationhood.

National flags are essentially visual representations of the qualities and values considered representative of a nation’s citizenry. They often immortalise historical experiences understood to be fundamental to the development of the nation. In the Jamaican flag, the colour black is said to represent hardships (in both the past and the future), suggesting that the ability to overcome such difficulties through perseverance and determination are basic components of the Jamaican psyche. Similarly, in Guyana, the colours black and red are used to symbolise innate courage, strength and

energy, while the red in Trinidad's flag is said to represent the people's vitality and strength; the black, their strength and unity of purpose. As such, the flags claim these traits as integral qualities of their respective nations. Importantly, the attributes enshrined within the flags are free from ethnic specificity and are available to a wide spectrum of individuals.

Economic symbols are also incorporated into national flags and further define national community by identifying ownership of unique economic resources. In this sense, all three flags declare the potential wealth of their respective nations. In Jamaica and Guyana, this prosperity is represented in the colour gold; in Trinidad, by black. The source of such wealth is also suggested by the colour schemes, with gold suggesting mineral resources and black suggesting oil. Although Jamaica and Guyana acknowledge a continuing importance of agriculture in their nations' new economies (represented by the colour green), the recognition of other sources of national wealth provides an alternative to the monocrop economy that was the legacy of the colonial order. The incorporation of wealth into a national emblem suggests that ownership and control of economic resources is exclusive, limited to members of the nation, as are the financial benefits to be reaped from such resources. Thus, economic roles become an important means of defining belonging.

The economic resources emphasised in the flags also define nation in terms of the territory in which these resources exist. Flags are important sites to symbolically legitimise claims to the land, affirming its physical boundaries and mythologising its physical territory as the birthplace of the nation. The colour schemes of the national flags assist in this project by signifying something of the unique geography of the lands for which they stand: Guyana's green and white symbolises her forests and waters; similarly, green represents land in Jamaica. Trinidad's flag differs in that it



goes beyond mere topography to suggest an important connection between the land and the identity of the people therein. In fact, it implies that the land created – and continues to create – a unique people. The white on the flag symbolises the seas that surround the region as well as a “cradle of heritage”<sup>59</sup>. By bringing together the ideas of an isolated space and a new heritage, the flag gives dramatic visual representation of the idea that only this unique environment could give birth to an equally unique people.

National anthems are another powerfully emotive means of providing succinct definitions of group membership. In many cases, this is achieved by inscribing the nation’s official values in verse. For example, the Guianese and Trinidadian anthems specify that their citizens are those who commit their lives and service to the nation. In the Jamaican anthem, mutual responsibilities towards fellow citizens are emphasised. As with its flag, Trinidad’s anthem also makes particular mention of equality amongst the members of the nation. The anthem declares: “Here every creed and race find an equal place”, thereby asserting that neither creed nor race are important signifiers of belonging in the national community. In a similar fashion, the Jamaican anthem calls upon its citizens to demonstrate “true respect for all”.

The establishment of historical continuity was particularly important for British West Indian nationalists because they were dealing with a disrupted and essentially immigrant population. They were faced with the task of establishing their nation’s historical validity without appealing to a pre-colonial past. Typically, this issue was addressed by locating the “birth” of the nation within the abuses of the colonial system. Thus, an acknowledgement of shared historical memories is a recurring theme in their national anthems. For example, the Trinidadian anthem opens

---

<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

with a declaration of unity based on those historical experiences that demonstrated a love of liberty and a faith in the nation's singular destiny. Guyana's anthem is much more detailed. The homage and service that the nation demands from its citizens is deemed the fitting response to the sacrifices made by their ancestors – “both bondsmen and free” – to establish the nation. These acts of sacrifice and toil performed by her early inhabitants is portrayed as the inheritance of current citizens and forms the basis for the anthem's declarations of interracial unity. In contrast, the Jamaican anthem's only reference to the past is the prayer that the nation remain free from evil powers, a statement which could be interpreted to suggest that she had at one time been under such control.

National coat of arms provide yet another opportunity to symbolise the nation in a visual format. In the coat of arms for all three regions, indigenous features of the landscape are prominent: in Jamaica, pineapples and crocodiles; in Trinidad, the three peaked mountain range that inspired its name and the Cocrico bird (found only in Tobago); and in Guyana, diamonds, water and jaguars. Unlike Jamaica and Trinidad, Guyana's coat of arms pays particular attention to the nation's industries. Trinidad focuses more on a visual portrayal of the union of Trinidad and Tobago. Of the three, Jamaica's coat of arms seems to be the least meaningful in terms of depicting a national narrative, with nothing to really link its physical reality back to national myths. A male and female Arawak stand on either side of the shield and appear as strange representatives of “the people” since the Arawaks had been wiped out centuries before Jamaica became an independent nation.

The national mottoes inscribed on the coats of arms also make claim to a distinct community although, ironically, the wordings are quite similar, reflecting one

of the primary aims of the British West Indian nationalists – the creation of a united people. Guyana's motto is "One people, one nation, one destiny" and Jamaica's proclaims "Out of many, one people". The focus is clearly on proclaiming national solidarity, although the wording for Jamaica's motto could be interpreted as indicating a process of becoming unified rather than having actually achieved that state. Jamaica also specifically acknowledges the complex nature of her population with the phrase "out of many"; however, the motto's emphasis on the development of "one people" declares that not only is a broader identity – "Jamaican" – available to citizens, it suggests that this identity has been specifically created through the coming together of these various elements of the population. As such, it becomes a powerful statement of a unique heritage and a denial of the fragmented and divided order that the colonial narrative asserted.

Guyana's motto, especially when taken into consideration with the popular description of Guyana as a "land of six peoples", also suggests a coming together of various groups to overcome divisive and competing identities in the creation of a new inclusive community. Trinidad's motto is similar in that it also appeals to broad group solidarity on the grounds that "Together we aspire; together we achieve". The motto suggests underlying divisions in Trinidadian society by its focus on the need to come together at the same time as it recognises the possibility and benefits of overcoming such divisions by working together. All three mottoes' assertion of a group unity that overrides ethnic and other divisions imply *a priori* loyalty to this broader group category as fundamental to group membership.

For the most part, the symbolic representation of West Indian nationhood contained in these devices is successful in defining community in terms that are largely free from ethnic specificity. Nothing in the aforementioned symbols produce



nationhood in terms that would exclude the Chinese. Indeed, by their emphasis on multiethnic unity, they validate the Chinese presence. However, these symbols are “flat” in the sense that they are “inactive” or “non-performative”. Chinese belonging fares less well once such symbols are given substance. Indeed, the historical events and personas chosen as practical symbols of nation tend to be linked specifically to the Afro-West Indian experience, more particularly to Afro-Euro conflict in the West Indies. This is especially evident in the choice of West Indian national heroes.

National heroes are important national symbols because their experiences, especially when a nation selects a set of national heroes, become the story of the nation’s struggle to come into existence – its national myth. Such events are portrayed as links in a chain leading directly to independence and nationhood, and by doing so, they declare the inevitability and legitimacy of the nation. The other significance of national heroes is that they provide a literal face for the nation.

Currently, Jamaica has seven national heroes, a group composed of six men and one woman. Four of these individuals are linked directly to high profile protests against British colonialism in which the Afro elements of Jamaican society had leading roles: Samuel Sharpe, leader of an 1831 slave rebellion; Paul Bogle and George Gordon, associated with the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865; and Nanny, a Maroon leader admired for her successful guerilla campaigns against British forces.

The fact that none of the four were attempting to establish nations in the form that they are recognised today is unimportant in terms of national myth; what is important is their common suffering under the British and their rebellion against such abuse. This commonality is both the thread linking the various individuals together and the framework for understanding the relationship between the nation and its former colonial masters that is central to the national narrative’s definition of

belonging. It also provides poignant and vivid justification for independence, and declares that independence and nationhood were earned and paid for by “the people”. In other words, the activities of these previous centuries are made to appear as a prelude to twentieth century independence politics, as led by the first two prime ministers of Jamaica, also national heroes, Alexander Bustamente and Norman Washington Manley.

Jamaica’s final national hero is Marcus Garvey. Although born in Jamaica, Garvey spent many years abroad, particularly in the United States, where he gained renown for his work with the Universal Negro Improvement Association, his message of pan-Africanism, and his insistence on the innate dignity and value of the Black man. The decision to include Garvey into Jamaica’s gallery of national heroes can be interpreted as a “young” nation’s attempt to associate itself with an internationally recognised personality; however, Garvey also provides a connection between the previous centuries’ activities – essentially individual and unorganised reactions to colonial tyranny – and the development of organised political goals and self-consciousness. In this sense, Garvey is the personification of growing political self-consciousness and the vision needed to turn autonomous acts of rebellion and dissatisfaction into a politically organised idea of independent nationhood.

Guyana has only one national hero, Cuffy, a slave who led a significant slave uprising in 1763. As with pre-twentieth century Jamaican national heroes, the canonisation of Cuffy’s experience as representative of the nation’s story establishes an outline for nation expressed in terms of resistance and revolution. It firmly links

independence to this event; indeed when Guyana became a republic, the event was described as the “final step to freedom [from] the first step taken by Cuffy”<sup>60</sup>.

Although national heroes are specifically chosen to demonstrate those generic qualities represented in other national symbols in action, the fact that they are also individuals from specific ethnic and class categories cannot help but affect the understanding of whom they represent. Where national heroes are chosen exclusively from one particular ethnic or class category, it suggests that the nation is located within such spaces. In the case of Jamaica and Guyana, all the national heroes are associated with slaves or their descendents. As such, it is easy to equate Afro-West Indian experience with the nation’s experience and exclude other groups, like the Chinese, from being perceived as active members of the nation. For example, while the Chinese were notorious for deserting the plantations and practicing methods of passive and active resistance to the abusive conditions of indenture, their activities are not explicitly celebrated within British West Indian national narratives<sup>61</sup>. Instead, national narratives remain largely expressed through slavery.

It perhaps speaks to the recognition of this difficulty that Trinidad has not yet chosen national heroes; however, this does not mean that Trinidad is free from representing the nation in ethnically restrictive symbolic terms, as evident in the official recognition of specific cultural expressions as nationally representative. In this regard, Trinidadian politicians, particularly Eric Williams, have claimed that calypso, carnival and steelpan capture the essential persona of Trinidadians; however, all three are also closely associated with Afro-Trinidadian culture and experience. Williams

---

<sup>60</sup> Forbes Burnham, *A Destiny to Mould. Selected Speeches by the Prime Minister of Guyana* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1970), p. 72. Further references to this work are given after the quotation in the text.

<sup>61</sup> For example, Chinese labourers on an estate in Couva went on strike in 1866.



even describes the calypso as an African “retention of the purest type”<sup>62</sup>. Indeed, an increasing awareness of what is seen as an official, if as yet unacknowledged prioritisation of Afro-Euro Trinidadian values and norms with regard to national representation has recently become more stridently expressed. For example, members of Trinidad’s Hindu community have criticised the fact that the nation’s highest award is called the “Trinity Cross” on the grounds that they believe the name implicitly defines Trinidad as exclusively Christian space<sup>63</sup>.

In Jamaica, a marking out of Afro-Jamaican cultural expressions as the most relevant symbols of nationhood can also be observed in the attention given to patois poetess Miss Lou, or Edna Manley’s sculpture, “Negro Awakening”, and later, reggae. The 1950s debate about the celebration of Chinese New Year mentioned previously provides a more explicit indication of the overlap between Afro-Jamaican cultural and national space. The editors write:

Jamaicans of Chinese origins serve their own interests best by absorbing themselves into the Jamaican community. Every time they have a separate and special holiday or celebration, they are emphasising their difference from the rest of us when they should be emphasising their similarities. This is not good for them or for us. There must come the time when they, like the rest of us, must *forget our origin and become Jamaicans*.<sup>64</sup>

Here, it is asserted that “the Jamaican community” is composed of those who have forgotten their origins; but, as a response from the Chinese community indicates, ethnic amnesia is not required for Afro-Jamaicans to be considered as Jamaican. When the respondent asks, “why not advocate abandoning the famous John Canoe

---

<sup>62</sup> Eric Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1964), p. 39. Further references to this work are given after quotations in this text.

<sup>63</sup> For further reading on the difficulties of performing the national mottoes and symbols of Trinidad and Tobago in an “ethnically inclusive” manner, see also Gordon Rohlehr, ‘The Culture of Williams. Context, Performance, Legacy’ and Ivar Oxaal, *Black Intellectuals Come to Power: The Rise of Creole Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1968).

dance at Christmas time” no real reply is made<sup>64</sup>. The reason is evident: to be Afro-Jamiacan is to be Jamaican. Unlike the Chinese, there is no perceived conflict between an African ethnic and cultural heritage and claiming belonging in Jamaican space.

The inability of national symbols and emblems to create a stable definition of nation that incorporates and validates the Chinese presence is indicative of the inherent confusion within the concept of nation itself. Indeed, British West Indian nationalists shift between civic and ethnic ideas of nationhood when they attempt to transform symbols into performance. It is at this point that Chinese belonging in West Indian space becomes questionable. This “writing out” of the Chinese that occurs at the symbolic level is also evident in the political discourse through which West Indian nationalists constructed the nation.

## **Speaking the Nation: Constructing Nation in Language**

The political speeches and writing of leading West Indian nationalists, such as Norman Washington Manley in Jamaica, Eric Williams in Trinidad, and Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham in Guyana, are important sites for investigating the production of nationhood for, as both Hall and Foucault, might argue, nationalists spoke the nation into being. National discourses, like national symbols, customs and ceremonies, make clear the boundaries of the nation, albeit through linguistically established images.

---

<sup>64</sup> ‘Squibs’, *Star*, 1 February 1955, reproduced in Lynch-Campbell, p. 107, emphasis added.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Fireworks over ‘Squibs’’, reproduced in Lynch-Campbell, p. 110.

## Territorial Boundaries

Nations are never borderless. The concept of nation has always linked a specific group of people to an equally specific territory. The nationalists of the British West Indies inherited territories that had been defined by colonialism. During the independence period, however, both Guyana and Trinidad had opportunities to redefine their nations' territorial spaces and to develop a discourse of belonging within territorial terms.

Throughout the 1960s, Guyana faced challenges to her territorial integrity from Venezuela and Surinam. As early as 1962, the Venezuelan government contested a border settlement that had been established with the British in 1899, threatening to annex all of Guyana's territory west of the Essequibo. Throughout the 1960s, Venezuela made recurring agitation for control of this region, including mobilizing military in the region and allegedly supporting a short-lived rancher rebellion in the Rupunini region in 1969. On her eastern border, Guyana faced a similar threat from Surinam. Indeed, Surinam forces briefly occupied Oronoque in 1967. The threat was considered serious enough for the Guianese government to establish troops in its eastern regions.

In Trinidad, the issue was not over an explicit hostile take-over *per se*; instead, it was a question of control and ownership of land. In 1941, the American navy had been given permission by the British government to set up a base at Chaguaramas, a peninsula in Trinidad's north-west. Williams and the Peoples National Movement ("PNM") challenged the validity of this agreement on the grounds that it had been made without the consent of local Trinidadians. In 1957, Williams pushed to have



Chaguaramas selected as the site for the West Indian Federation's capital, a move that clearly claimed local Trinidadian ownership of and right to control this space<sup>66</sup>.

In 1960, Williams issued a "call to the nation, to all sections and interests, irrespective of race, colour, class, creed, national origin or previous condition of servitude" to join him in a demonstration against continued American occupation of Chaguaramas<sup>67</sup>. The community to whom Williams addressed himself was defined along a conceptual border that marked out Americans and British as "non-Trinidadians" and local inhabitants of Trinidad as the "real" Trinidadians, regardless of their ethnic or historical differences. Further, by describing the Chaguaramas situation as another "political manoeuvre of colonialism", Williams effectively drew a line between colonizer and colonized, and between outsider and insider to the nation (ibid., p. 231). In this sense, Chaguaramas was depicted as a Trinidadian "war of Independence". In Williams' words:

Chaguaramas means the reversion of *our soil and resources*. Chaguaramas means the vindication of *our governmental rights and prerogatives*. Chaguaramas represents *for us* an acid choice between the alternatives – an independent nation with a will of its own or a banana republic the satellite of a foreign power. Chaguaramas and Independence go hand in hand; the road to independence leads through Chaguaramas. (ibid., p. 233, emphasis added)

In 1960, however, faced with continued pressure from Trinidad, the American government made a new agreement with Trinidad, the terms of which included the return of a large portion of the land in question, as well as large-scale American

---

<sup>66</sup> The failure of West Indian Federation, sometimes attributed to Jamaican nationalism, provides an interesting site to explore the question of nationhood in the British West Indies; however, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. For a brief synopsis of the West Indian Federation, see Elizabeth Wallace, 'The Break-up of the British West Indies Federation', *Caribbean Freedom. Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, ed. by Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Kingston: I Randle Publishers, 1993), pp. 455 – 475.

<sup>67</sup> Eric Williams, *Inward Hunger. The Education of a Prime Minister*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 231. Further references to this text are given after quotations in the text.

evacuation. Chaguaramas had thus provided a dramatic means of identifying those who belonged in the nation.

Burnham also depicted Venezuela's acts of territorial aggression against Guyana within a colonial context. He accused Venezuela of seeking to "re-impose the yoke of colonialism on a young and small nation" and suggested that adherence to colonial attitudes had been the impetus behind the Rupunini ranchers' rebellion (Burnham, p. 170). Burnham claimed that the ranchers were a class who had "traditionally resented the authority of the central government, more especially since independence when that authority passed from British to Guianese hands" (ibid., p. 175). In terms of defining the nation, it was an important point to make. By arguing that the government was now in "Guianese hands", Burnham defined the ranchers, along with the British, as "non-Guianese" and questioned their claims to ownership of their lands on the grounds that they had proven themselves disloyal to the new Guianese-run state.

Territorial concepts of nationhood suggest a particularly inclusive construction of community. In the case of Guyana, Burnham made it clear that loyalty to the state was the most important grounds of group membership. In Trinidad, however, with regard to Chaguaramas, rightful possession of the land was once again related to a narrative of slavery that linked nationhood with Afro-Trinidadians. For example, during a speech to encourage support of the demonstrations against the Americans, Williams made the following statement:

Our enemies said we would never be free. They said we would never be fit for freedom. They said we could never govern ourselves. They said that we were a lazy, servile race, desirous only of sitting in the sun and eating yams and pumpkins, capable only of aping the graces of our European masters. They said we could never operate democratic institutions, we could never be governed along European lines.

Our magnificent demonstration today gives the lie to this imperialist indictment of the West Indian people. (Williams, *Inward Hunger*, p. 232)

Williams' words are a direct response to nineteenth century representations of the slaves and ex-slaves made by British opponents to emancipation and supporters of indentured labour, most famously, Anthony Trollope and Thomas Carlyle. Both Trollope and Carlyle have become particularly associated with solidifying the image of the ex-slave as lazy and incompetent – interested only in lying in the sun eating yams all day<sup>68</sup>. By choosing this specific reference, Williams defines “West Indian people” in terms of slavery. The preciseness of his allusion makes it difficult to incorporate other experiences, including indenture, into his vision of national community.

Territory, in terms of nation, is not only physical space. As has been suggested above, within anti-colonial independence rhetoric, national territory has always been connected to a question of economic control over a defined space. As colonies, Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana had been used as resources for the benefit of the British. Nothing about the imperial enterprise was geared towards economic development or improvement of the colonies. The resultant financial suffering was a strong impetus towards the push for self-government and eventual independent status, for nationalists connected economic improvements in their respective regions with local control of economic resources. Thus, nation was represented in terms of a community in charge of its own economic destiny. As Manley put it, being a colony meant having no “definite economy of our own, no control over our market, no

---

<sup>68</sup> See Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (London and Edinburgh: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968, first published 1858), and Thomas Carlyle, ‘Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question’, *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, vol. XL (1849), online at: <http://cepa.newschoo.edu/het/texts/carlyl/carlodnq.htm>, as of 12 April 2002. This image is discussed in more detail in chapter three.



representative of an authoritative character that can speak for ourselves and our own interests”<sup>69</sup>. In a similar fashion, Burnham declared that by gaining economic control of the state, “Guianese will be masters of Guiana” (Burnham, p. 11). Jagan also drew a line between “us” – Guianese – and “them” – colonisers – when he told his national audience that under colonialism “*our* trade is operated against *our* best interests”<sup>70</sup>.

In his history of Trinidad and Tobago, Williams linked the economic concerns of the present to a long-running attitude of disregard for the colonies on the part of the European empires that had come in contact with Trinidad. For Williams, the precedent for all European-Trinidadian contact was established by the Spanish conquistadors who explicitly stated that they were only interested in how the island could enrich them and that they had no concern for the welfare of its inhabitants. Williams also depicts the attitude of the British towards the sugar industry as a further demonstration of the same careless attitude for the well-being of the local inhabitants. In particular, Williams cites Britain’s willingness to maintain outmoded means of sugar production, namely massive human labour, as evidence of her ultimate disinterest in fostering the island’s economic development. Even the political union of Trinidad and Tobago is presented as yet another manifestation of imperial disregard for the colony in that Trinidad was forced to take responsibility for the bankrupt Tobago without regard for how such a decision would affect her. The recognition of the colonial system’s non-desire or inability to manage the local economy in a manner that benefited the local inhabitants is identified by Williams as the location of national consciousness for it convinced “ordinary people in Trinidad that the only way to have

---

<sup>69</sup> Norman Washington Manley and the New Jamaica. *Selected Speeches and Writings 1938 – 1968*, ed. by Rex Nettleford (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1971), p. 164. Further references to this work are given after quotations in this text.

<sup>70</sup> Cheddi Jagan, *Forbidden Freedom. The Story of Guyana*, Coolie Odyssey reprint (first printing 1954) (London: Hansib Publishing Limited, 1989), p. 17, emphasis added. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

their affairs properly administrated was to select their own elective representatives” (Williams, *History*, p. 192). Thus, as in Jamaica and Guyana, the nation in Trinidad is defined in terms of a community sharing economic concerns and interests.

This question of economic control allowed nationalists to represent their territories as economic homelands that belonged only to those individuals who were committed to their economic improvement. It is a discourse that replaces the myth of the territory as the birthplace of the nation that is at the heart of many national narratives. Such reasoning is behind Burnham’s claim that “the minerals within the bowels of our earth belong to the Guianese for whose benefit they must be won” or his definition of “Guianese” as those individuals who “are working here and devoting [their] energies to the development of Guyana” (Burnham, pp. 21 and 55). It also designated insider and outsider status in Jamaica when Manley insisted that members of the business community had a responsibility to assist in the development of Jamaica. Similarly, in Trinidad, it was argued that only with independence would Trinidadians understand that there was an innate link between ownership of the nation and an “obligation to contribute to its welfare, . . . [and] its economic recovery” (Williams, *History*, p. 241).

Perhaps the most explicit example of the centrality of an economic community to the image of nation lies in Burnham’s assertion that the Amerindians’ rights to participate in the nation rested on their recognition of the state’s right to ownership and control of the territory’s economic resources and their willingness to contribute to the development of Guyana’s economy. In a statement to Amerindian chiefs, Burnham advised that to be considered as “full-fledged Guianese citizens” Amerindians were expected to work “together with other Guianese citizens . . . [to] develop the resources of this country for the benefit of us all”(Burnham, p. 138). No

special entitlement was offered to the Amerindian community with regard to economic resources, even though their ancestors were the original inhabitants of the territory.

On the surface, this use of economic interests to designate national boundaries suggests an idea of national community in which membership is open to the Chinese. To be included within nation space they need simply demonstrate that they were committed to, and participated in the overall economic development of their nations. But this potential inclusion was complicated by the habit of framing this discourse within representational strategies that prioritised the story of slavery. In the case of Jamaica, the Chinese monopoly of trade added another level to this problem.

The colonial economy of the British West Indies was rooted in the sugar industry; and the sugar industry, in turn, was built upon slavery. As a result, economic relationships within the colonies up to the time of independence and beyond were often expressed in terms of slave and master. Within this framework, anti-colonial demands for independence were often intertwined with Afro-West Indians' demand for freedom to participate in the benefits of the economy and freedom from economic abuse. This meant an overlap between nationhood, in terms of economic interests, and slave (or Black) interests.

In Jamaica, the two political parties to emerge pre-independence grew directly out of Black working class agitation for improved economic conditions. Labour and politics were closely intertwined with both parties retaining strong support from trade unions. In fact, Manley would argue that labour and politics were "one progressive movement" and that the "objective of government . . . is the improvement of the conditions under which ordinary people live" (*Manley*, pp. 127 and 157). Under his leadership, the People's National Party ("PNP") defined itself as the defender of the



“little man”, namely the Afro-Jamaican peasant farmer or labourer, against the exploitation of colonial capitalism. Similarly, the name choice for the PNP’s rival, the Jamaican Labour Party, made the link between labour and politics even more explicit. In Jamaica, nationalism was largely understood to be the expression of the interests and ambitions of the Black masses. It is within this context that Manley could claim that: “the mass of the population [i.e., Blacks] are the *real people* . . . those who will not unite with them on all fundamentals are the real *aliens in the land*” (ibid., p. 100, emphasis added).

The Chinese monopoly of the retail trade industry in Jamaica meant that they were, as a group, often distanced from the economic interests from those defined as “real Jamaicans”. Thus, the Chinese could readily be represented as “aliens in the land”. A 1936 article that appeared in the *Daily Gleaner* demonstrates clearly such positioning:

. . . our Chinese citizens have embarked upon trade and trade only. By so doing *they* have swept out of existence the *native traders* for the most part, and men capable of entering this line of business find themselves today with no opportunity of trading in *their own country* . . . We admit at once that the Chinese born in this country has a very strong case to put forward if anyone contends that he has no place in Jamaica. He has a place. But *he is expected to feel as a Jamaican* and to view the country’s future as something which intimately concerns himself and must intimately concern his children.<sup>71</sup>

The language used in the article demonstrates a number of representational techniques that ultimately construct an image of the Chinese as outsider to the boundaries of Jamaican nation. First, the Chinese are polarised against “native traders” and those who want to trade in their “*own country*”. Second, the brief acknowledgement that local-born Jamaican Chinese have a claim to Jamaica does not

---

<sup>71</sup> ‘Alien Question’, *Daily Gleaner*, 25 February 1936, as reproduced in Lynch-Campbell, p. 94, emphasis added.

really locate the local-born Chinese in Jamaican space because it is undermined by the condition that they “feel” Jamaican. This feeling, it is implied, must be demonstrated in their business activities. In this way, the condition actually reinforces a division between “being Chinese” and “being Jamaican”. Finally, the fact that the Chinese community’s economic successes was seen as a threat to the nation rather than as evidence of national success, reveals clearly that the Chinese are not perceived to be members of the nation.

Defining the Chinese as aliens because of their economic positions was not exclusive to Jamaica. Indeed, in all three colonies, Chinese participation in the retail sector is often couched in terms of warfare that depict the Chinese as an invading army. By doing so, the territorial boundaries of the nation are established on the basis of who has the right to benefit economically from West Indian space. In both cases, the Chinese are represented as outsiders, a position that is at odds with the inclusive narrative of shared financial struggle against colonial powers.

## The Nation in Historical Space

Nations occupy temporal as well as literal space. The legitimacy of the present nation is grounded in past experiences. The “past nation” serves as an important means of establishing group cohesiveness because it identifies members of the nation as sharing some ancient bond. For British West Indian nationalists, it was important to establish that their nations had such histories. As Burnham put it: “A country without its own history, without its own heroes, without its own legends . . . would find it difficult to survive” (Burnham, p. 68). Similarly, in the forward to his history of Trinidad and Tobago, whose release was timed, significantly, to coincide with

independence, Williams claims that “The very fact of National Independence, . . . made the history of Trinidad and Tobago mandatory” (Williams, *History*, p. vii).

Williams was particularly concerned to establish Trinidad, and its inhabitants, as having a valid and important place in world history. In many ways, his *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* is a direct challenge to the colonial claim that “the only makers of history, the only authors of advancement” were imperialists, whilst all others were “either passive or reactionary and destructive”, “a negative element in the world”(ibid., p. 110). Thus, Williams takes care to establish that the colonised elements of Trinidadian society came from well-developed civilisations. Williams also demonstrates the artificiality of the colonial narrative by revealing how it consistently provided the same identity to the colonised, regardless of ethnic background. For example, Williams quotes colonial documents from 1512, 1790 and 1869, which use almost the exact same words to describe Amerindians, Africans and Indians as liars, thieves, lazy and unclean. In this manner, Williams uses history to establish an important discourse on solidarity; namely, that of shared suffering under colonialism. Williams constructs national brotherhood in a womb of sorrow. It is in this context that Williams claims the Amerindians as the ancestors of all Trinidadians (ibid., p. 2).

Important to this discourse of shared suffering was the merging of the experiences of slavery and indenture. In Guyana, Burnham collapses the different guises of colonialism into one experience when he claims that “Indians and Africans and all other races for that matter in this country suffer from the same oppressive system” (Burnham, p. 8). Manley makes a similar claim when he argues that Jamaicans “are the product of a very old and enduring colonial era” (*Manley*, p. 110). Jagan is more specific, actually equating indenture with slavery when he describes



indenture as a situation in which “paper chains were substituted for iron chains”, a comparison also made by Williams when he describes indenture as “slavery plus a constable” (Jagan, p. 16; Williams, *History*, p. 105). Establishing shared suffering under colonialism as the underlying historical memory of the nation allows for the possibility of incorporating the Chinese into the nation on the grounds of their indentureship. Indeed, it initially appears that this discourse is the most likely to afford a stable representation of the Chinese as members of the nation; however, on closer examination, a number of factors actually undermine the integration of the Chinese into nation space.

First, except in Guyana, Chinese immigrants spent a relatively short time on the plantations. In Trinidad and Jamaica, Chinese indentured labourers rarely re-contracted at the end of their indenture periods and also shortened their indenture by buying out their contracts or absconding from the estates. Another aspect interfering with the ability to imagine the Chinese as victims of indenture was the significant influx of immigrants around the beginning of the twentieth century who had no history on the plantations.

The perception that the Chinese were innately successful in business also impeded their ability to be contained within the discourse of suffering so fundamental to the national narrative. Whether or not it was true, there was a very real sense that the Chinese had not suffered adversely from the experience on the plantations in comparison to the slaves. Furthermore, as businesspeople, they could be portrayed as exploiters rather than as co-sufferers. Finally, at the heart of this discourse in suffering is the overriding metaphor of slavery. Slavery is portrayed as the real historical memory of the nation. Indenture, and any other type of suffering, is relevant only in how it compared with slavery. This meant that not only was membership in the nation

based on slavery, it also set up a timeline in which slavery was the historical moment in which the nation was born. Thus, because they arrived after this period, such discourse ultimately locates the Chinese outside the nation.

## Legitimising Nation: Defining a Unique Community

A nation's legitimacy is also based on the grounds of the existence of a unique community. British West Indian nationalists typically used two means to assert such distinctiveness: one was the claim that a community had been created in which "racial divisions" were unimportant; and the second was the establishment of a unique political identity<sup>72</sup>.

A repeating theme for Manley was the need for Jamaicans to overcome their divisions and unite all "the diverse strands and factors that history has given us and out of which we must make a single and integrated people or perish by the way" (*Manley*, p. 159). Although in this speech, Manley suggests that such a process had not yet truly began, at other times he insists that not only had it happened, but that it was the decisive feature of Jamaican identity. Thus, he claims that "We have in Jamaica our own type of beauty, a wonderful mixture of African and European . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 109). Importantly, the ability of Jamaicans to live in harmony, to create their "own type of beauty" from interethnic contact, is identified by Manley as a quality that would allow Jamaica to be unique in the global arena. In his words, "The greatest contribution Jamaica and the West Indies can make to the world is to prove that a

---

<sup>72</sup> I have not used terms like "race" or "racial" to avoid the terminological confusion that surrounds the words. "Race", for example, has been used in anthropology and other branches of social science to designate ethnic traits, social status and biological features. For many West Indian nationalists, particularly in the independence period, "race" was commonly used to refer to groups of people sharing phenotypical characteristics, ethnic or cultural markers and historical experiences. This is how the term should be understood where it is used in the remainder of this chapter.

society can be made where black and white and brown and yellow live together as men and woman in mutual harmony and shared respect" (ibid., p. 159).

Like Manley, Williams considers the major test of Trinidadian nationhood to be the integration of its various peoples; however, he was more explicit than Manley in his claim that such integration was Trinidad's peculiar heritage. By doing so, Williams claims "melting pot culture" as one of the qualities that sets Trinidad apart amongst other nations. In fact, Williams locates such a culture as far back in the history of Trinidad as he can in his attempt to demonstrate the validity of his claim. Thus, he notes that Trinidad's unique location allowed it to be a meeting point of Carib, Arawak and other Amerindian cultures. Subsequently, Williams argues, this mixing of cultures and races continued with the arrivals of the Spanish, French and British, as well as the African slaves and the Chinese, Indian and Portuguese indentured labourers.

In Guyana, perhaps due to overt racial tensions, Burnham chose a different route to assert multiethnic cooperation, expressing the nation in terms that can be described as "anti-racial". Racial allegiances were officially undervalued in favour of a loyalty to the "non-racial" nation. Burnham denied the importance of race by such declarations as "we are Guianese first, Guianese second, and Guianese third" and "We know only one race, that is the Guianese race" (Burnham, pp. 86 and 8). For Burnham then, "being Guianese" was being defined as empty of ethnic or racial loyalties.

Such statements, however attractive, could not ease the very real existence of ethnic tension in Guyanese society, particularly when they proved so easy to manipulate for political ends<sup>73</sup>. Thus, Burnham utilises another strategy in the attempt

---

<sup>73</sup> Throughout their political careers, both Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan made official statements condemning racialised political appeals and promoting interracial harmony and cooperation; however, both men have been accused of relying on racial division to consolidate their political power. In fact, the breakdown of Guyana's political scene into Indo and Afro-Guyanese factions during the



to forge group solidarity. He insists that Guyana was faceless in terms of race by continually emphasising the image of a nation composed of six peoples: "Each group has its contribution to make to the storehouse of Guianese culture. Each group has its contribution to make in the moulding of a free Guianese nation" (ibid., p. 13). In this regard, the incorporation of the relatively large and visible Amerindian population was also an important means of demonstrating Guyana's distinctiveness. Every time the Amerindians were recognised as one of the six peoples making up Guyana, a distinctive identity for Guyana, unavailable or unutilised in either Jamaica or Trinidad, was claimed. In the end, multiethnic diversity and harmony are specified by Burnham as the fundamental basis of Guyana's identity. For example, three years after independence, Burnham claimed that:

Today in Guyana, it is heartening to note a new awareness of the value of our diversity and respect for, and acceptance of, the customs and cultures of the peoples who comprise our country – customs and cultures out of which we can create richer ones *uniquely Guyanese*. (ibid., p. 149, emphasis added)

The other important method that nationalists used to establish their nations' distinctiveness was the construction of new political identities, usually through anti-colonial discourse. Throughout his career, for example, Manley claimed that Jamaica had a right to chart its own political course, free from the constraints or agendas of other political powers and by doing so, declared that Jamaica had its own identity as a political community. For Manley, this identity was to be found in an economic and political philosophy that was distinct from the position of the former coloniser, namely, democratic socialism. Democratic socialism, as formulated by Manley, not

---

1960s (a division that continues to be felt today) demonstrates that racial manipulation occurred on some practical level regardless of how either Jagan or Burnham represented the nation in their official statements. For a brief overview of Guyana's political history in the twentieth century, see Latin America Bureau (Research and Action Ltd.), *Guyana: Fraudulent Revolution* (Nottingham: Russell Press Ltd., 1984).

only made an important political division between coloniser and colonised – insider and outsider in terms of nation – it was also the means of effecting this division. As Manley put it, democratic socialism was to be the tool with which to “disinthrall ourselves from the colonial patterns that have grown into our minds” (*Manley*, p. 97). In other words, it was understood to be the framework that could best meet Jamaican needs and best express their identity.

In Guyana, Burnham and the People’s National Congress (“PNC”) embraced a similar concept of flexible socialism. Like Manley, Burnham claimed that the socialist policies enacted by his government would entirely upset the previous colonial order and would create conditions that would allow the expression of a unique Guianese identity. Important in this regard was Burnham’s claim that his version of socialism would not be explicitly based on the forms of socialism that existed in other countries because he rejected the “straitjacket of [European countries’] dogmas and tactics” (Burnham, p. 155). For the PNC, however, an even more explicit means of asserting a unique, independent political identity was to be found in their policy of “neutralism”.

Burnham defined “neutralism” as having “no commitment to come out or make a decision on either side of a [Cold War] dispute”, meaning essentially “that neither of the superpowers could automatically depend on” Guianese support (*ibid.*, p. 208). The policy was an obvious attempt to distance himself from Jagan’s communist stance and the capitalist position of the United Force. It allowed Burnham an opportunity to accuse his political opponents of importing their political outlooks and to suggest that their policies were “alien” to the “real” Guianese experience; showed no confidence in the Guianese people; and would effectively undermine Guyana’s independence. By promoting neutralism, the PNC portrayed itself as the only political party to have faith in the creativity and abilities of the Guianese people as an

independent political unit. For example, typical Burnham statements in this regard include the following:

We must look to *our own condition*, take into account *our own special circumstances* and free from slavish imitations fashion for ourselves a society whose goals reflect the genius and the needs of *our people* and the uniqueness of *our State* . . . we must not seek to create a replica of any of the developed countries. (ibid., p. 149, emphasis added)

We are a people in *our own right* with brains and talent of *our own*, with a knowledge of *our people* and *our own history*, with an understanding of *our own problems and our own resources*, with an appreciation of the kind of world in which we live. We must apply *our own brain powers to our environment*, develop *our own philosophy and our own ideology*. (ibid., p. 163, emphasis added)

Such language, through its repetition of the words “our” and “our own”, identifies the Guianese people not only as unique, but capable and deserving, of their own political identity. In this fashion, Burnham essentially merges the idea of a Guianese identity with that of his policy of neutralism. Furthermore, Burnham invests neutralism with additional value by suggesting that, as an expression of Guianese identity, it would allow Guianese to make a unique contribution to “the unity and understanding among the nations of this world” by allowing her to act as a voice of “moral persuasion” and “dispassionate thinking” in the midst of Cold War tensions (ibid., pp. 203 and 205).

The language used by British West Indian nationalists to legitimise claims of uniqueness also affected the understanding of the Chinese communities’ relationship to the nation. On the one hand, the political identities chosen to affirm unique nationhood had the very real potential to exclude the Chinese. Their association with the retail industry, for example, created a real difficulty in incorporating them within the socialist frameworks of Jamaica and Guyana for, as owners of private enterprises, their interests were out of step with the concept of publicly owned enterprise on which so many socialist, and in the case of Guyana, communist, policies were based. On the



other hand, when nationhood was understood to be a celebration of multiethnic harmony, the Chinese were represented as an important component of the national community. Their presence was an effective means of validating that claim. Indeed, it is the only discourse in which the Chinese have a consistently positive representation. The result is that once again, the Chinese are located in an ambivalent relationship to the boundaries of the nation, positioned as both insiders and outsiders to these borders depending on the discourse within which they are represented.

## Conclusion

National narratives, as with the symbolic rendering of British West Indian nationhood and the theories that serve for its framework, exhibit conflicting impulses with regard to representing belonging for the Chinese. There is a desire to incorporate the Chinese communities into the national community because their presence can validate, in a highly visible fashion, the existence of a unique multiethnic nation; however, such integration occurs most easily at a theoretical level. On a practical level, British West Indian nationhood is performed in terms of Afro-Euro (and in particular, Afro-West Indian) experiences, expressions and interests. This leaves basically three ways in which the Chinese can be represented in relation to the nation: they can be ignored, alienated or marginalised, existing as vague, shadowy images on the edges of the national community; they can be enemies or exploiters in a continuing narrative of national suffering; or, nation space can be expanded to include the Chinese in spite of their difference. Friend or foe, the ultimate place of the Chinese is undecided and “homemaking” – the establishment of a place of comfort for the Chinese in the West Indies – remains incomplete.

In the following chapters, this study will examine how the unresolved status of the Chinese in the national imagination is demonstrated through representations of the Chinese in British West Indian texts. Chapter three begins by examining nineteenth century representations of Chinese immigrants and explores how such depictions were directly linked to the pressures of the discourses in which they were created. Chapter four focuses on twentieth century fictional representations of the Chinese and traces the long-term staying power of Chinese images of the previous century. It also examines how Chinese characters are used to add definition and detail to national narratives, and the comparative failures and successes that occur when attempts are made to move them out of their more common stereotyped roles. The study concludes with a chapter on how Chinese West Indian authors have chosen to respond to such representations, investigates how they represent the Chinese in relation to the nation and explores whether they are able to create more stable depictions of “belonging” for the Chinese.

## Chapter Three

### **“Configurations of Power”: Nineteenth Century Representations of the Chinese Community**

“In a constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westener in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.”  
Edward W. Said<sup>74</sup>

“. . . the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes . . . the *same old* stories of the Negro’s animality, the Coolie’s inscrutability or the stupidity of the Irish *must* be told (compulsively) again and afresh . . .”  
Homi Bhabha<sup>75</sup>

To better understand the ambiguous state of belonging in which the Chinese stand in the British West Indian imagination one must examine their representations in the nineteenth century – the period when the Chinese first arrived. The first impressions, so to speak, of the Chinese migrants and the roles afforded to them within West Indian discourse would have long-term implications for how they were to be depicted *vis à vis* other members of the community. Clearly, in this regard, we are not talking about membership in a political and cultural nation as defined in nationalist articulations of the twentieth century. After all, the nineteenth century was still the period of empire and the West Indies was understood to be merely one component within the larger British imperial enterprise. Nevertheless, there were spaces of belonging defined within the West Indies, perhaps even more so than in other areas of the empire, because of the clearly stratified society that the plantation economy required. Group membership, interactions and identities were intrinsically

---

<sup>74</sup> Edward Said, ‘Orientalism’, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, op. cit., pp. 87 – 91 (p. 90). Further reference to this work will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>75</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘The Other Question. Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism’, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66 – 84 (p. 77). Further reference to this work will be given after quotation in the text.



bound to issues of power and prestige in colonial societies. Thus, representational strategies employed in the depiction of the Chinese in the West Indies must be understood as important means of delineating power relationships within the context of colonial discourse.

Nineteenth century West Indian depictions of the Chinese must also be considered in relation to a larger debate concerning identity and privilege at that time. "Being Chinese" was neither an open category nor a blank canvass. It was part of a larger "Occidental-Oriental" discourse that classified "Chinese" as essentially an anti-Western counter-image. To be "Chinese" was to be the antithesis of everything that this discourse identified as "Western": to be morally and physically inferior; to be effete rather than virile; to be deceitful and cunning, rather than upright and pure. Such images, combined with a sense of White manifest destiny, resulted in the creation of a vivid, widespread and powerful Western stereotype, "the heathen Chinees", who signified the boundaries of Western identity and justified Western claims to dominance in the world order<sup>76</sup>. So popular was this stereotype that in 1885,

---

<sup>76</sup> Bret Harte's poem, 'Plain Language from Truthful James', more commonly known as, 'That Heathen Chinees' because of its repeated use of that phrase, describes an encounter between a White Californian and a Chinese migrant in a cardgame ('Plain Language from Truthful James', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XVII, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897, pp. 129 – 131). Both players try to cheat each other, but the Chinese player, significantly named, Ah Sin, is more successful at the deception. The poem was a phenomenal success and the phrase "the heathen Chinees", complete with the negative associations of the poem, became a popular international stereotype. Even Charles Kingsley and Edward Jenkins, upon encountering Chinese migrants during their time in the West Indies, made specific reference to "the heathen Chinees" when recounting these incidents.

Ironically, Harte most likely intended to challenge stereotypes of the Chinese in California – "... to discharge from [the reader's] mind any idea of a chinaman that he may have gathered from the pantomime ..." (Bret Harte, 'Wan Lee, the Pagan', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. II, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897, pp. 262 – 279, p. 264,) – a continuing theme in his work. (Harte provides a more precise analysis of the negative constructed nature of Chinese identity in the lesser-known poem 'The Last Chinese Outrage', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XVII, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897, pp. 142 - 145). Nevertheless, the general public's overwhelming acceptance of both the poem and the idea of "the heathen Chinees" clearly indicates that the image captured widespread attitudes towards the Chinese during the nineteenth century. (For further reading, see Margaret Duckett, 'Plain Language from Bret Harte', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 11(4) (1957), 241 – 260 and Gary Scharnhorst, 'Ways that are Dark: Appropriations of Bret Harte's 'Plain Language from Truthful James'', *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 31(3) (1996), 377 – 399.)

the Canadian Secretary of State confidently claimed that “The Chinaman seems to be the same everywhere”<sup>77</sup>.

Nineteenth century Chinese immigration coincided with significant social and economic changes in post-emancipation British West Indies. The nineteenth century Chinese stereotype of undesirable outsider came into contact with the unique tensions and dilemmas of a society in the midst of renegotiating its boundaries. Where would the Chinese migrants stand in relation to the other established groups, namely, the Black slaves (and later emancipated slaves) and the White estate-owning classes? Were they to be contained within the narrative of slavery, or would their presence destabilise this narrative? What effect, if any, would they have on the perimeters defining group identities? How would they affect the distribution and access to power in the developing nation? In this chapter, I argue that the fabrication and dissemination of Chinese images in West Indian colonial discourse was an attempt to reinforce the colonial order in the face of such issues. This agenda meant that the depictions of the Chinese in the West Indies dramatically disrupted some of the more commonly held stereotypes of the Chinese in the Western imagination. In particular, the outsider status afforded to the Chinese was more flexible in terms of its negative associations and its actual boundaries. Not only was the image of the Chinese significantly more positive than elsewhere, their position as extreme outsider in the West was also less certain. This chapter, therefore, begins with the examination of common nineteenth century images of the Chinese.

---

<sup>77</sup> Kay J. Anderson, ‘The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category’, *Annals of the American Geographers*, 77(4) (1987), 580 – 598 (p. 586). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

## Encounter in the East: Danger, Deceit and Depravity

The nineteenth century saw unprecedented contact between China and “the West”. The danger and mutual hostility involved in such contacts were incorporated into two Western discourses that can be broadly described as “commercial” and “missionary”. These discourses sought to reaffirm the idea of Western superiority in terms of culture and civilisation, and the right of the West to dominate, exploit and control other areas of the world. At the same time, however, experiences in China provided very real threats to the West’s political and commercial ambitions, as well as to its self-image. The encounters between the West and China, essentially clashes over territorial control, were represented such that the Chinese were portrayed as the personification of danger to Western aims and ambitions. Such depictions, largely a response to commercial expansion leading up to the Opium War, resistance to Christianity in China, and the Taiping and Boxer Rebellions, reveal how Western fears and frustrations in the East became the building blocks for the stereotype of “the heathen Chinese”.

Although China had been involved in trade with the West since the sixteenth century at least, she had always retained strict control of how, where and when such contacts would take place<sup>78</sup>. For Britain, dislike for this system was compounded by the fact that, for a long time, she suffered from a large trade deficit with China, having failed spectacularly to find a market for her products. The Emperor of China’s memorable response to a letter from King George III in 1793 captures the general Chinese attitude towards British imports up until the nineteenth century: “Strange and

---

<sup>78</sup> By the early nineteenth century, trade with Europeans was conducted in China under what became known as the “Canton System” or “Canton Trade System”. Under this system, European traders were restricted to Canton during annually specified periods. The system was so restrictive that areas of Canton in which the traders could reside were also designated.



costly objects do not interest me. I . . . have no use for your country's productions"<sup>79</sup>. However, only fifty years later, there had been a dramatic reversal of positions between China and Britain, for Britain had finally discovered one product in her empire for which Chinese taste seemed insatiable – opium.

The illegal importation of opium into China by Britain proved to be a massive financial boon<sup>80</sup>. In 1839, in response to the widespread addiction problem, China's imperial government issued an edict prohibiting smoking or trading in opium. Nonetheless, Britain continued to pursue her drug trade, while at the same time, demanding that China open up to free market trade. China attempted to impose the terms of the imperial edict by shutting down Canton to foreign trade. This action resulted in open warfare between Britain and China. The conflict became known as the Opium War. In effect, there were two phases of outright warfare in the Opium War, the first running between 1840 – 1842 and the second between 1856 – 1860, both ending in crushing defeat for China and unparalleled access to China by Western powers.

The conflict and the resounding defeat of the Chinese had an important effect on Western imagination. The war "proved" that China was weak, its civilisation exhausted, and unable to stand against the progressive forces of the West. The rampant opium addiction of the period was also, with no apparent awareness of irony, used to depict the Chinese as a diseased, depraved and deteriorating people in contrast to a healthy and vibrant West. In this way, the Opium War was represented as confirming Western superiority. It also had another important effect on depictions of

---

<sup>79</sup> Kenneth Saunders, 'When East First Met West: Some Notes on Early Contacts', *Pacific Affairs*, 15(7) (1932), 609 – 615 (p. 611). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>80</sup> It has been estimated that between 1820 and 1835, opium exports from the British Empire had increased by 400 per cent. At the same time, opium addicts in China were estimated to number around 12 million by the 1830s.

the Chinese: the battle lines meant drawing a boundary between friend and foe that corresponded with “Occidental” and “Oriental”. The Chinese became a very real source of potential physical danger to Westerners located in China. They were thus, consistently represented as untrustworthy and scheming. Fears of Chinese “faithlessness” were often evident in attitudes towards Chinese officials. For example, one British diplomat warned that “. . . Chinese Ministers are more ready to give satisfactory assurance to a foreign agent than to take proper order with unruly subordinates” while an English-language newspaper claimed that Chinese officials were “treacherous”, “masters of the diplomacy bluff” and the “Celestial sham”<sup>81</sup>. This sense of Chinese danger is even more evident in nineteenth century literary texts like T.W.H. Crosland’s rewriting of Bret Harte’s popular poem, ‘The Heathen Chinee’ and Charles Leland’s poem ‘A-lùm the Baker’<sup>82</sup>.

Crosland’s version of ‘The Heathen Chinee’ is built around the idea that the Chinese heart has a “false bottom”. In the poem, the West asks China, personified in the character Ah Sin, to open its door to trade and, by doing so, “Let the world see that if you *are* yellow,/ You’ve got a white heart” (Crosland). Ah Sin agrees and appears to be showing his “white heart” by proffering his hand in friendship, smiling and opening wide his door to trade. Then, seemingly without reason (other than perhaps the “cheap goods” being poured in his lap), Ah Sin declares: “I thirst/ For the blood of the wise./ Bring hither that dam Foleign Devil:/ Behold, I will tear out his eyes!” and the Boxer Rebellion, consisting of things “That curdle the blood” abruptly

---

<sup>81</sup> James E. Kirby Jr., ‘The Foochow Anti-Missionary Riot – August 20, 1878’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 25(4) (1966), 655 – 679 (p. 671) and George E. Paulsen, ‘The Szechwan Riots of 1895 and American ‘Missionary Diplomacy’’, *The Historical Journal*, 28(2) (1969), 285 – 298 (p. 288). Further references to these articles will be given after quotations in the text.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Crosland, ‘The Heathen Chinee’, *The Five Notions* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002); Charles Leland, ‘A-lùm the Baker’, *Pidgin-English Sing-Song* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002). Further reference to these poems will be given after quotations in the text.

begins (ibid.). In this manner, not only does the “false bottom” become the opposite of the “white heart”, it is also identified as particularly “Chinese”.

In ‘A-lúm the Baker’, a Hong Kong baker with a large clientele of foreigners (“*fan-kwei*”), decides, upon reading an official proclamation offering a hundred dollars for every foreigner killed, to dispose of half of his customer base by poisoning their breakfast rolls. His plan is foiled when the scholar from whom he buys the poison realises that he could make more money by selling poison to a large number of Chinese customers and dilutes the poison with plaster. Here, danger towards the West is exhibited at all levels of Chinese society, from the Mandarins who make the official proclamation, to the scholars who provide the poison, to the lowly bakers. Indeed, the scholar’s behaviour both re-emphasises the image of the duplicitous Chinese and the sense that there is a large body of Chinese ready and waiting to harm the foreigners. In fact, this anti-foreigner feeling is apparently so rampant, that the scholar is able to sell all his poison and skip town before A-lúm’s rolls even turn brown. The choice of food as the means of murder is also important in underscoring the danger that lies in the presence of the Chinese by suggesting that in their hands, even something as innocent as a breakfast roll can become a weapon.

The religious overtones of the Taiping Rebellion also helped cement the negative image of the Chinese. The uprising lasted on and off between 1851 – 1864 under the leadership of a failed scholar named Hung Hsiu-Ch’uan who had some links to Christianity<sup>83</sup>. Because of Hung’s connections to Christianity, his uprising received

---

<sup>83</sup> During a depressive breakdown, Hung had a series of hallucinations which he later interpreted, in light of some Christian tracts, to mean that he had been divinely called to rid China of idolatry and return the country to “true worship”. Some time later, Hung spent a brief period studying under a Christian missionary named Reverend Issachar Roberts, although he quit the mission abruptly. For further reading, on Hung and the Taiping Rebellion see: Eugene P. Boardman, ‘Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion’, *The Far East Quarterly*, 10 (1951), 115 – 124; Philip A. Kuhn, ‘Origins of the Taiping Vision: Cross-Cultural Dimensions of a Chinese Rebellion’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 19(3) (1977), 350 – 366; Yuan Cheng Teng, ‘Reverend Issachar Jacob Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 23(1) (1963), 55 – 67;



some initial support from missionaries. They believed that if successful, the rebels would provide the missionaries with unprecedented evangelical opportunities in China. They were also impressed with the seeming Christian stance of the rebels. For example, Hung reportedly built churches, destroyed temples and ancestral tablets, and required his followers to repeat the Ten Commandments. But the Taiping Rebellion soon disillusioned missionaries as far as its implications for Christianity were concerned. In fact, the Taiping beliefs actually contradicted basic Christian doctrines on a number of levels, not the least of which was Hung's claim to divinity as a Son of God and brother of Jesus.

The Taiping Rebellion provided yet another opportunity to depict an essential incompatibility between China and the West; and, more importantly, it suggested the possibility of Western contamination in the presence of the Chinese just as Christian doctrines had become polluted by Hung. In this sense, China was presented as a moral danger. In Leland's poem 'Mary Coe', the corruptibility of the West is played out, albeit for humorous effect, when the child of a missionary, begins to "tinkee-leason like Chinee", speaks the Chinese pidgin English of Leland's poetry, and, finally, responds to the question "Which form of faith you most admire?" with the sensational assertion:

My like Chinee Joss-pidgin best;  
My love Kwan -yin wit'h chilo neat,  
An' Joss-stick smellum muchee sweet.

Afong our olo cook, downstair,  
He teachee Maly Chinee player,  
Talk if my chin-chin Fo, ch'hoy!  
Nex' tim my born, my bornee boy.<sup>84</sup>

---

P.M. Yap, 'The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-Ch'uan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion', *The Far East Quarterly*, 13(3) (1954), 287 – 304.

<sup>84</sup> Charles Leland, 'Mary Coe', *Pidgin-English Sing-Song or Stories in the China-English Dialect* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002. The "translation" provided online reads: I like Chinese clergyman best/ I like Kwan Yin (goddess of mercy) with neat

The image of the innately dangerous Chinese and his antipathy towards Westerners found further credence in the highly publicized hostility towards Christian missionaries throughout the nineteenth century, ranging from massacres, as in Fukien in 1895, to the destruction of property, such as occurred in Foochow in 1878 and Szechwan in 1895<sup>85</sup>. To a large degree, the animosity demonstrated towards the missionaries was not so much against their religions *per se* but against them as representatives of foreign powers. This connection is unsurprising in light of the fact that many nineteenth century thinkers did not make an explicit division between the secular and the sacred. Indeed, commerce and Christianity were often depicted as the pillars on which Western civilisation had been established and would be advanced. As David Livingstone put it during a lecture tour of England in the 1850s: "Those two pioneers of civilization – Christianity and commerce – should ever be inseparable"<sup>86</sup>. What Livingstone, and others like him, were arguing was that Christianity and commerce were mutually supportive in that they opened up venues for each other that would ultimately improve the spiritual condition of those "natives" and the financial situations of the British.

In nineteenth century China, the link between religious and secular interests was particularly close. Missionaries so often played diplomatic roles or acted as advisors to politicians and diplomats that it could be said that in China, "The

---

child/ And joss stick smells very sweet/ Afong our downstairs cook/ Teaches Mary Chinese prayer/  
Tells me if I pray to Buddah – ha ha!/ Next time I'm born, I'll be born a boy."

<sup>85</sup> In the case of Foochow, a 20-year feud, started when missionaries established a compound on a hill believed to affect the *fēng-shui* of the surrounding village, ultimately ended with the missionaries barricading themselves in a house while a mob ransacked the grounds and the buildings. In Szechwan and in the surrounding areas, three days of rioting, looting and violence were directed against foreign missions. (See Kirby Jr., 'The Foochow Anti-Missionary Riot – August 20, 1878', *op. cit.*, and Paulsen, 'The Szechwan Riots of 1895 and American 'Missionary Diplomacy'', *op. cit.*)

<sup>86</sup> Andrew Porter, 'Commerce and Christianity: The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth Century Slogan', *The Historical Journal*, 28(3) (1985), 597 – 621 (p. 598). See also, Brian Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity: Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842 – 1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26(1), (1983), 71 – 94.

missionary at his best is always a statesman . . .”<sup>87</sup>. The missionaries also relied heavily upon foreign military bodies for their protection, a situation that only solidified their association with foreign political interests. As a result, it is no surprise that missionaries would be targeted during the Boxer Rebellion.

The Boxer Rebellion, lasting from early 1900 until the summer that same year, was not directed specifically at missionaries; but because of its comprehensive anti-foreign stance, the missionaries were inevitably involved, particularly since many missions, located deep in the Chinese interior were vulnerable to attacks<sup>88</sup>. At least 212 missionaries and 5,000 Chinese converts to Christianity were killed in the course of the uprising (Rankin, p. 161). The attacks on the missionaries added another dimension to the negative image of the Chinese being constructed in the West. It created a framework of good and evil in which the Chinese were cast as malevolent, sometimes satanic, forces. Thus, for example, Chinese officials, who were accused of not effectively punishing rebels could be described as “demons who have no right out of hell” (Paulsen, p. 288). Missionaries added to such images by describing China in terms of their own spiritual concerns. They produced images of a place that was a veritable hell on earth, of “. . . rampart idolatry, infanticide, slavery in women, polygamy, opium obsession, noonday orgies, treachery, and endemic gambling” (Anderson, p. 591) and a “nation groaning under oppression and violence, their courts filled with bribery and injustice; their markets with cozening and deceit, their houses with concubines and even worse abominations”<sup>89</sup>. The lack of large-scale conversion

---

<sup>87</sup>Henry William Rankin, ‘Political Values of the American Missionary’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 13(2) (1907), 145 – 182, (p. 182). Further references to this article are given after quotation in the text.

<sup>88</sup>Indeed, so anti-foreigner was the Boxer’s position that in the early stages of their uprising, they were anti-Qing dynasty, since the Qing dynasty was Manchu.

<sup>89</sup>R. Valerie Lucas, ‘Yellow Peril in the Promised Land: The Representation of the Oriental and the Question of American Identity’, *Europe and it’s Others*, vol. 1, proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1984 (Essex: University of Essex, 1985), pp. 41 – 57, p. 42. Further references to this article will be given after the quotation in the text.



to Christianity in China was also presented as “diabolical”: “so puny was the record of conversions in fact, that some missionaries concluded that the wily Chinese were conscious agents of Satan who deliberately humiliated God with acts of immorality” (Anderson, p. 591). Chinese languages could also be framed within this religious discourse, “ascribed to the devil who endeavored by it to prevent the prevalence of Christianity in a country where he has so many zealous and able subjects” (Lucas, p. 42).

As the aggressive trade activity of Western powers indicates, nineteenth century China held much allure for the West; however, experience in China was fraught with very real political tensions that challenged Western self-images. China’s explicitly expressed sense of superiority (at least, until her defeats in the Opium War) and her overall rejection of Western civilisation disputed British claims of cultural pre-eminence and their view of themselves as the leaders of the world. British colonial discourse contained and controlled these issues by fabricating an image of China and the Chinese, that was the converse of all that the West claimed for itself and affirmed the moral and cultural superiority of the West. To paraphrase Edward Said, China “was not . . . a free subject of thought or action . . . European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient” (Said, p. 89). This strategy was also consistently employed in those locations in the West where the Chinese migrated during the nineteenth century, including the British West Indies; although here, because of the unique social and political pressures of the colonies, negative images of the Chinese were significantly reworked.

## Encounter in the West: 'The Heathen Chinees' Migrates

Dire political, social and economic conditions in nineteenth century China contributed to unprecedented emigration of the Chinese into various locations in the West, including the United States, Canada, Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia<sup>90</sup>. As the Chinese migrated, so did the stereotype of the "heathen Chinees". Descriptions of the Chinese in the West were notably similar regardless of the location in which they were produced. The Chinese were represented as a financial threat to the established White order, not simply as extra bodies in competitive workplaces, but because they were described as having an unnatural love of wealth and a purported genius for deception and theft that made them unfair and unbeatable competition for the Whites. They were also portrayed as "filthy" in physical and moral habits and, as such, a potential contaminate of the White communities to which they had migrated. In fact, the reputed filthiness of the Chinese acted as a general metaphor for the perceived Chinese threats against White order and as a justification to exclude them from these communities. Represented as dirty in body and mind, the Chinese could also be portrayed as an ultimately inferior breed of humanity. Finally, the Chinese were represented as being exotic, mysterious and unknowable. They were consummate aliens who could not, and should not, be assimilated into Western society.

In the British West Indian colonies, however, instead of being lazy, cheeky, dirty and sly, the Chinese were often portrayed as valuable members of society, "superior to any immigrants" and "unquestionably, the fittest sort of immigrants for the colony"<sup>91</sup>. This difference in representation lay in a manipulation of Chinese

---

<sup>90</sup> For background conditions on the nineteenth century Chinese migrations, see June Mei, 'Socioeconomic Origins of Emigration. Guangdong to California, 1850 – 1882', *Modern China* 5(4) (1979), 463 – 501.

<sup>91</sup> James Brunton Stephens opens his poem 'My Other Chinese Cook' with this description of the cook: "He was lazy, he was cheeky, he was dirty, he was sly" (*The Poetical Works of Brunton Stephens*, 1903, accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002. Further

images such that the migrants were understood to be key elements in the maintenance of White power and privilege.

Bhabha recognises that stereotypes are a point of dramatization and “. . . what is being dramatized is a separation”, a marking out of difference (‘The Other Question’, p. 82). In the case of the Chinese in nineteenth century West Indian colonies, their representations dramatised a distance between the Whites and the Blacks, reinforced the image of Black inferiority, and drew a boundary between the Whites and the Chinese in such a manner that White domination over both Blacks and Chinese was justified. The image of “the heathen Chinee” was, thus, manipulated – sometimes rewritten or reinforced – such that a West Indian stereotype of the Chinese as being paradoxically both insider and outsider, and negative and positive element within the West Indies, was created.

## Images of the Chinese in the West Indies

### “Like Water in a Reservoir”: Chinese Labour and the Economic Status Quo

In a study of the California labour market during the nineteenth century, Terry Boswell explores a connection between heightened use of anti-Chinese racist discourse and activities, and economic factors affecting the level of competition between Chinese and White labourers<sup>92</sup>. He identifies three high periods of anti-Chinese activity in the late 1800s, all of which correspond with particularly

---

references to this poem will be given after quotations in the text); Parliamentary Papers, vol. XXVII, Fourteenth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 1854 (Chadwyck-Healey 58.239 – 58.241. Further references to this report will be given after quotations in the text); editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 19 January 1854.

<sup>92</sup> Terry, E. Boswell, ‘A Split Labor Market Analysis of Discrimination Against Chinese Immigrants, 1850 – 1882’, *American Sociological Review*, 51(3) (1986), 352 – 371. Further references to this article will be given after quotation in the text.



competitive market conditions. For example, his first period, 1852 – 1854, coincided with a phenomenal increase in the Chinese population (from 2, 716 in 1851 to 20,026 in 1852) and a recession in gold prices. During this period, Boswell reports, White miners organised themselves into “vigilance committees” aimed at driving the Chinese out of the mines. Violent opposition also arose to a piece of legislation aimed at introducing Chinese contract labourers. One minority report against the bill captured what was perceived to be at issue when it claimed that the bill would result in “the surplus and inferior population of Asia . . . [being] brought into competition with the labour of *our own people*”<sup>93</sup>. The report was written in a discursive environment that insisted that Chinese greed and general inferiority meant that they were willing to live at lower standards, work for lower wages, and, motivated by unnatural industry, work hours that the White labourer could or would not. Such qualities, in combination with the common practice of hiring the cheaper Chinese labour gangs and the increase of the Chinese population, gave rise to the perception that the Chinese would drive the Whites out of the labour market. As Boswell concludes, “According to the ideology of the white miners, competition with the Chinese was unfair . . .” (Boswell, p. 357).

The image of unfair Chinese competition and the danger it posed to the financial well-being of White labourers appears repeatedly throughout nineteenth century literature. Bret Harte’s ‘Plain Language from Truthful James’, for example, makes an explicit link between Chinese deception and unfair business practices when Nye announces “We are ruined by Chinese cheap labour” at the discovery of Ah Sin’s deception in the card game (Harte, ‘Plain Language’, p. 130). As with the minority report referred to above, Nye makes a division between “we” – the Whites who

---

<sup>93</sup> Rodman W. Paul, ‘The Origin of the Chinese Issue in California’, *The Mississippi Valley*

“belong” in California – and “them” – the Chinese, represented as financial parasites to the White community. His behaviour, attacking Ah Sin, also suggests that the only way to manage the “unfair” competition is through physical violence.

On the other side of the world, Edward Dyson’s popular short story ‘A Golden Shanty’, set in Australia, is even more explicit in its representation of the Chinese miners as a financial threat to the survival of Doyle and his family<sup>94</sup>. Not only are the Chinese apparently teetotalers, meaning they will not patronize his pub, they end up literally stealing the walls around him. More subtly, the Chinese oust Doyle from an occupation that he had used to supplement his paltry earnings: “He had found fossicking by the creek very handy to fall back upon when the woodjambing trade was not brisk; but now the industry was ruined by Chinese competition” (‘Golden Shanty’, p. 252)<sup>95</sup>.

The British West Indian colonies faced a different labour issue. They were suffering from a lack of productive labour on the plantations and it was believed that immigrant labour was the only way in which plantation economy would survive. One writer to a newspaper described the situation in this manner:

Immigration to this province may be likened to supplying with water a reservoir employed to afford power to extensive mechanical appliances; when the supply is abundant, the machinery will work up to its full power; but, when it proves to be deficient, when the source is obstructed by any circumstances, the water in the reservoir will sink below its working level and the machinery will stop.<sup>96</sup>

---

*Historical Review*, 25(2) (1938), 181 – 196 (p.187, emphasis added). Further references to this article will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>94</sup> Edward Dyson, ‘A Golden Shanty’, *The Penguin Book of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Australian Literature* ed. by Michael Ackland (Victoria: Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 1993), pp. 250 – 260. Further references to this story will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>95</sup> The image of the negative impact of the Chinese presence on the financial survival of White Australians reappears throughout Dyson’s poetry. For example, in ‘Jonah’s Luck’ (*Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines*, accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002), the narrator remembers that he “. . . went fossicking old places;/ But the Chows had been before me, and had scraped the country bare;” while in ‘A Poor Joke’ (*Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines*, accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002), the narrator complains that “. . .that these Chinese were sapping/The wealth of the land . . .”.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Letter to the Editor’, *Royal Gazette*, 12 February 1850.

As a source of migrant labour, the Chinese were thus entering into a discursive environment that was predisposed to depict them favourably as the source of power that would keep the colonial financial machinery running.

Labour relations in the West Indian colonies had been significantly disturbed when the slaves had been emancipated in 1833 and their mandatory apprenticeships concluded in 1838. A further shake-up for the sugar industry, the backbone of the West Indian economy, had occurred in 1846 when the *Sugar Duties Act* was passed<sup>97</sup>. The sugar industry fell into such severe decline that by 1850, it could be claimed that sugar estates in the West Indies had devalued 90% in ten years and that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of West Indian planters were on the verge of absolute ruin<sup>98</sup>. The dire financial state in which the colonies found themselves by the mid-nineteenth century was commonly blamed on a perceived lack of disciplined and controlled labour on the sugar estates.

Anti-slavery agitation had been based largely on a moral question; however, abolitionists also held out a financial theory in support of their position. They proclaimed an “emancipation doctrine” which asserted that free labour was more efficient and productive than slave labour<sup>99</sup>. They insisted that, once freed from the degrading bondage of slavery and in the possession of wages, the Black labourer would discover that it was in his best financial interests to be even more productive and dedicated to his task than he had been as a slave. Wages, it was declared, were a stronger motivator than the whip could ever be. Through this argument, abolitionists

---

<sup>97</sup> This Act removed tariffs protecting British West Indian produced sugar in the British market, placing it in direct competition with the slave-produced sugar of other countries, most notably, Cuba.

<sup>98</sup> E. Stanley, *Claims and Resources of the West Indian Colonies. A Letter* (London: T & W Boone, 1850), pp. 13 and 35. Further reference to this work will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>99</sup> W. G. Sewell, *The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1861), p. 272. Further reference to this work will be given after quotation in the text. For more nineteenth century thought on the costs of slavery versus free labour, see Herman Merivale, ‘Lecture XI’, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), 300 – 348.



claimed that post-emancipation, the Blacks would remain on the estates and sugar production would increase. In reality, neither promise was fulfilled.

Unsurprisingly, in many British West Indian colonies, relations between the newly independent Black labourers and the planters did not run smoothly after emancipation. Blacks were accused of disrupting the labour-intensive and time-specific sugar production processes by being unreliable. A common complaint was that the ex-slaves showed up to work whenever they felt. Supporters of the ex-slaves suggested that this behaviour was related to the treatment the Blacks were receiving from the planters. For example, writing in 1859, William Barrett reported that the ex-slaves eagerly applied for work on the plantations after emancipation; however, they became disillusioned by the extremely low wages they were being offered. Barrett also accused the planters of acting in bad faith towards those Blacks who did work by refusing to pay them, by paying lower wages than had been agreed, or by making late payments<sup>100</sup>. Planters were also said to have driven the ex-slaves away from the plantations by instituting high rents, ejecting Blacks from estate land if they refused to work for the estates where they were located, and placing heavy taxes on buildings and lands that the Blacks might otherwise have been able to afford (Sewell, pp. 109 – 110).

By such arguments, abolitionists indicated that they were unwilling to abandon the theory that free labour was more effective than slave labour<sup>101</sup>. They claimed, however, that the planters' treatment of the ex-slaves had so alienated the

---

<sup>100</sup> William Barrett, *Immigration to the British West Indies. Is it the Slave-Trade Revived or Not?*, (London: A.W. Bennett, 1859), p. 6. Further reference to this work is given after quotation in the text. See also Douglas Hall, 'The Flights from the Estates Reconsidered', *Caribbean Freedom. Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, ed. by Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Kingston: I Randle Publishers, 1993), pp. 55 – 63.

<sup>101</sup> As late as the 1860s, a newspaper editorial was claiming that "free labour is, as an economic experiment, vastly cheaper than slave-labour" (editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 9 February 1860).

Blacks that the labour experiment had been ruined. Abolitionists sought another source of free labourers to prove their hypothesis. Chinese indentured immigration seemed to be an ideal source of labour for this situation, for although the migrants were nominally free, the terms of their contracts would ensure the type of controlled labour deemed so necessary to West Indian sugar production. For abolitionists, there was value to be had in depicting the Chinese as essentially hard-working and diligent labourers as this would justify bringing them into the colony.

West Indian sugar planters also welcomed the idea of Chinese indentured labour. They had long declared the emancipation doctrine a fallacy on the grounds that they believed that the slaves would not work after emancipation. Unlike the abolitionists, however, they argued that the ex-slaves' reluctance to work was the result of a natural proclivity towards indolence. The planters argued that the tropical climate and fertile lands of the West Indies created conditions that would foster this nature within the ex-slaves. This view was expressed succinctly by a former magistrate of Guyana in his memoirs when he wrote:

The slaves, being free, understood freedom to mean that they need not work anymore, and, as tropical conditions impose no very severe penalties on the idle, such as quickly overtake them in countries where labour is abundant and where there is a winter to face, they were able to persist in their views of the privileges of freedom. (Kirke, p. 206)

Indeed, the idea of the indolent ex-slave became transformed into the image of the "Lazy Negro", an image that was to become a common trope in the arguments of planters who supported indentured immigration schemes<sup>102</sup>.

---

<sup>102</sup> So well-established did the "Lazy Negro" image become, that in 1861, American Baptist Missionary Edward Bean Underhill was sent to investigate the conditions of the Blacks in the West Indies. He concluded that the ex-slaves were far from indolent and his work, *The West Indies: Their Social and Religious Conditions* (Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970), provides a striking contrast to Trollope and Carlyle.

Thomas Carlyle and Anthony Trollope, both proponents of indentured labour immigration to the West Indies, have become particularly closely associated with the popularisation of the “Lazy Negro” image during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In ‘Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question’, Carlyle blamed the decline of the sugar industry on an “unhappy wedlock of philanthropic liberalism and the Dismal Science” (that is, the emancipation doctrine), because according to him, neither position took into account the Blacks’ intrinsic laziness. In support of his argument, Carlyle litters his article with a series of images of the Blacks in the West Indies lying around eating pumpkins. Similarly, in *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, a text also saturated in images of the “Lazy Negro”, Trollope provides this description of what he claimed was the life of leisure indulged in by the ex-slaves:

He lies under his mango-tree, and eats luscious fruit in the sun; he sends his black urchin up for a breadfruit, and behold the family table is spread. He pierces a cocoa-nut, and lo! there is his beverage. He lies on the grass surrounded by oranges, bananas and pine-apples. (Trollope, p. 109)

Importantly for this study, however, representations of the Chinese in the nineteenth century provided a companion counter-image to the “Lazy Negro”: the “Industrious Chinese”.

The “Industrious Chinese” was not a stereotype unique to the British West Indies. Numerous nineteenth century texts throughout the Western world insisted that the Chinese work ethic was incomparable. In the poem ‘The Fossicker’, for example, the intense labour effort put forth by Jo and Lanky Mann in the mines, labour so profound that Lanky Mann dies “at the handle”, is described by Dyson in the words “. . . they’d worked the field, as Chinkies do”<sup>103</sup>. In the British West Indies, nineteenth

---

<sup>103</sup> Edward Dyson, ‘The Fossicker’, *Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002).



century Chinese immigration existed within the confines of this stereotype; after all, the original proposal to bring Chinese labourers to Trinidad was based on the claim that they were characterised by “indefatigable industry”, while when Chinese immigration was resumed in the 1850s, it was recommended on the grounds that the Chinese were said to possess “indomitable industry and perseverance”<sup>104</sup>. What gave the stereotype particular resonance in the British West Indies, however, was that this purported industriousness could be measured against the “Lazy Negro”<sup>105</sup>.

That such a comparison was a manifestation of colonial ideology is clearly shown by the fact that it was being asserted prior to the actual arrival of the earliest Chinese migrants. As early as 1802, it was suggested that the Chinese were so much more efficient and hard-working than slaves that a plantation worked by them could be done so at an annual savings of just under £3,000 compared to a plantation worked by slaves (Look Lai, *The Chinese in the West Indies*, p. 26). Later reports repeated this image, claiming, for example that “Unlike the negro who works and denies himself for a time, and with a view only to gain the means of maintaining himself for a corresponding interval in ease and idleness, the labour of the Chinese knows no cessation . . .” (ibid., p. 81). Indeed, so accepted had the comparison become that an 1871 government report could boldly declare that in the West Indies, “. . . every importation of African blood, whether Aboriginal or West Indian, has from the first

---

<sup>104</sup> Look Lai, *The Chinese in the West Indies, 1806 – 1995*, p. 23; Enclosed in Despatch from Walker to Newcastle, 8 July 1853, Parliamentary Papers, vol. XVIII, Copies or Extracts of Despatches Relating to Chinese Immigrants Recently Introduced into the Colonies of Guiana and Trinidad, August 1853. Further references to these papers will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>105</sup> A similar comparison was often used to depict the Chinese in a more positive light than the Indian migrants. Since the value of the Chinese was located in their potential for industrious labour one British Guianese newspaper praised the Chinese migrants for being “more muscular and athletic than the Cooly [*sic*]”, while a Trinidadian newspaper was pleased to report that the Chinese were “healthier, and stronger than the Coolie”. More explicitly, planters’ reportedly preferred the Chinese to the Indians because of the simple fact that “. . . they consider [the Chinese’s] physical strength greater”. (Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 16 July 1853; ‘The Chinese Labourers in the West Indies’, *Royal Gazette*, 16 February 1854)

regularly disappointed its promoters”<sup>106</sup>. That such a claim could be made despite 300 years of Black slave labour on the plantations, the resistance of estate-owners to emancipation, and the significant number of contemporary reports indicating that Black labour was actually more productive than Chinese labour, is testament to the effectiveness of the comparison in establishing the stereotypes<sup>107</sup>.

The more positive images of the Chinese in the West Indies than elsewhere in the West was connected to the belief that the Chinese would not adversely impact the financial position of the White stratum of society. The unproblematically positive depiction of the industrious Chinese illustrates this point; that is, even though the Chinese migrants did pose a financial threat to the Black and Indian members of society, this reality did not impact negatively on their representation. Indeed, Chinese labour competition with the Blacks in particular, was perceived to benefit the colonial order. As Charles Kingsley commented on his tour of the West Indies, it was hoped that the migrants would “ . . . teach the Negro thrift and industry, not only by their example, but by competing against him in the till lately understocked labour-market”<sup>108</sup>. Thus, in West Indian colonies, the “Industrious Chinese” was not to be feared or resented; rather, he was presented as playing a key role in the preservation of the colonial financial order.

---

<sup>106</sup> Report of the Commissioners to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in Guyana, Parliamentary Papers, vol. XX, June, 1871 (Chadwyck-Healey, 77.174 – 77.178). Further reference to this report will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>107</sup> For more on the resistance to emancipation, see Gordon Lewis, ‘Pro-slavery Ideology’, *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers Limited, 2000), pp. 544 – 579 and William Law Mathieson, *British Slavery and its Abolition 1823 – 1838* (New York: Octagon books Inc., 1967). James White insisted that Africa provided the best source of labour for the West Indies during a tour of China (White to Barkly, 19 July 1851, PP vol. LXVII) and a typical example of complaints about the uselessness of Chinese labour is included in the ‘Report of the Stipendiary Magistrates of Districts D, E and G’ (reprinted in *Royal Gazette*, 16 July 1853).

<sup>108</sup> Charles Kingsley, *At Last. A Christmas in the West Indies* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1889), p. 99. Further reference to this work will be given after quotation in the text.



Another stereotype that was reconstructed in the West Indies to create a positive rather than a negative image of the Chinese was that of the “Dollar-Worshipping Chinaman”. For many locations in the West, the Chinese’s reputed love of money was deemed a negative quality; for if they were to pursue wealth at all costs, armed with their superior skills at deception and industry, it would surely be at the expense of White labour. The literature of this period reflects such an understanding. Ah Sin’s cheating during the card game is an obvious example of this concept, as are the inordinate efforts of the Chinese miners to gain possession of Doyle’s gold filled bricks.<sup>109</sup> The detailed plan that the miners concoct to obtain possession of Doyle’s premises, seemingly stimulated by an abnormal desire for wealth, finds a parallel in the behaviour of See Yup in Harte’s short story of the same name<sup>110</sup>.

In the British West Indies, the stereotype of the money-loving Chinese migrant was also rampant. Here, the Chinese were described as “fond of money, and so devoted to the acquisition of it, that being never satisfied with what they possess, they will continue the pursuit of gain to the very last”, “anxious to do anything that offered, by which they might earn a small consideration”, and “eager for gain, and [willing to] do anything for money”<sup>111</sup>. Unlike elsewhere, however, such representations of the Chinese had an appeal for West Indian colonists. They suggested that the Chinese could be convinced to migrate to the West Indies as

---

<sup>109</sup> Dyson’s writing suggests that Chinese desire for Doyle’s gold has reached some unnatural level. After all, the Chinese are willing to lose out on their “natural rest” to brave the attacks by Doyle and his “strongly anti-Chinese dog” and the “ingenious mechanical contrivances” Doyle sets to catch them all in the pursuit of gold (‘Golden Shanty’, pp. 254, 257, 255).

<sup>110</sup> Bret Harte, ‘See Yup’, *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XVI, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 144 – 160. Further reference to this story will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>111</sup> Letter from White to Barkly, 21 June 1851, PP vol. LXVII) and Letter from Grant to Stanley, 24 July 1843, Parliamentary Papers, vol. XXXV, Correspondence Relative to Emigration of Labourers to the West Indies and the Mauritius from the West Coast of Africa, the East Indies and



labourers and would be unlikely to reject the demanding conditions involved in sugar production as long as they received suitable compensation. This would mean the survival of the plantation economy. Thus, it was argued that if the government would only make the terms of migration financially appealing to the Chinese, the sugar industry would have an endless supply of labourers since “. . . no undertaking . . . [is] too arduous for a China [*sic*] when there is a probable prospect of gain . . .”<sup>112</sup>.

The willingness of West Indian colonists to translate greed into goodness in terms of Chinese labour is also evident in one of Governor Barkly's report on the new migrants to Guyana. Barkly reports an incident in which the Chinese turned out to work on a Sunday and were greatly disappointed to find themselves forced to take the day off since it would reduce their earnings. Barkly claims that the Chinese indicated that they felt “Sunday was well enough for black people but it was hard that the Chinese should not be allowed to gain wages everyday if they chose” (Fourteenth General Report, PP vol. XXVII). Although in China, the non-Christian status and reputed obstinate paganism of the Chinese were often grounds for negative portrayal, this incident garners no such response in the West Indies. There is no accusation of sacrilege, no worry expressed that the Chinese are undermining the Christian environment of the colonies, and no rendering of the occurrence in terminology rife with satanic allusions. Instead, the official reaction is merely amusement. The benign nature of the colonial response is because the incident has been set within the context of the overall survival of plantation economy. In such a setting, Chinese greed could be portrayed as a positive attribute.

---

China, 1844 (Chadwyck-Healey 48.291 – 48.292). Further references to these papers will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from McQueen, enclosure, no. 4, Public Records Office, Colonial Office, CO 295/18. Further references to this collection will be given after quotation in the text.

The validation of the stereotype of the "Dollar-Worshipping Chinaman" was most often accomplished through a comparison with the Indian immigrants. Both were deemed inordinately fond of money, but the Chinese were depicted more favourably because of their apparent willingness to also spend that money. Typical examples of such comparisons include the following:

There is another broad distinction between the East Indian and the Chinese. The former is essentially parsimonious and content with a low standard of food, and with little and cheap clothing. The latter has large and more varied wants, is indulgent of his appetites and tastes, and liberal in his expenditure. His standard of food is high – his holiday dress is of rich and varied materials. He earns money not to hoard but to spend it<sup>113</sup>.

[The Chinese] are a sober, diligent, industrious, intelligent, and money-loving people, without being a miserly one . . . They like to make money, but they have not the faculty of hoarding it that distinguishes the penurious Hindoo, for they live more comfortably, and, when they can, more luxuriously than other Asiatic people . . . (Letter from Commissioners, 8 September 1843, PP vol. XXXV)

Such representations reflected well on the Chinese community because they depicted the Chinese as contributing to the overall financial well-being of the colonies by circulating money. In fact, by the 1870s, the planters of Guyana were petitioning the Combined Court to provide monies to introduce more Chinese labourers, even though it was considerably more expensive to import them, on the grounds that the Chinese were more beneficial to the economy. The petition they laid before the Court stated that the Indian labourer:

. . . does no direct good, or almost none, as his earnings, after supplying himself with the little food and very little clothing he indulges in, are either buried, put into the Savings Bank, or spent on uncirculating coins and Jewellery, lost for all purposes of Trade.

The Chinese on the contrary circulate their earnings freely in trade channels . . . <sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> 'Report of Trinidad's Standing Committee on Immigration', *Royal Gazette*, 25 August 1860.

<sup>114</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 10 June 1875.

Fifteen years earlier in Trinidad, the Chinese had received similar praise. In fact, even the “small-footed” Chinese women, routinely ignored because of their inability to work on the estates, received flattering depictions as “settlers of the best kind” because it was believed that by “getting opulent themselves” they would be “adding to the opulence of this colony”<sup>115</sup>.

There was, however, some ambiguity in the image of Chinese participation in West Indian capitalist economies because of the potential ill effects that such participation could have if the Chinese left their prescribed economic roles. As labourers supporting the plantation economy or as consumers contributing to the circulation of wealth, the Chinese presence did not interfere with the established financial order of the colony in terms of White dominance and control. Outside of these roles, however, the Chinese were understood to provide some threat to the financial order in the impact they might have on the survival of the plantations. As a result, the stereotype of the “Enterprising Chinese” as it appeared in the West Indies, had a less dramatic overhaul than that of the “Industrious Chinese” or “Dollar-Worshipping Chinaman”. Even if not portrayed as virulently as in other places, the “Enterprising Chinese” remained a vaguely threatening image within nineteenth century West Indian colonial discourse.

The fear that the Chinese would gain monopolies over whatever business enterprise they engaged in by dint of their “natural” industry, thrift and dishonesty meant that for many areas in the West, the stereotype of the “Enterprising Chinese” was a decidedly negative image. Martin Brown and Peter Philips’ study on competition, racism and hiring practice in late nineteenth century California vividly



demonstrates the relationship between racist imagery and this fear of competition<sup>116</sup>. Brown and Philips found that the depiction of Chinese involved in industries with low start-up costs was dramatically more repulsive than in other industries. In fact, at this time, a veritable public relations campaign was waged against Chinese cigar-makers based on the image of Chinese cigar manufacturers rolling cigars with leprous hands and sealing them with black spit. The study concludes that the different representations of the Chinese reflected the different sense of competition that White capitalists felt from the Chinese. Owners of well-established industries with high entry costs had little fear of Chinese competition. By contrast, in industries where there was low entry costs and lack of specialist skills, such as the cigar-making industry, a significant number of Chinese had gone into business for themselves. Thus, by the time California began to feel the effects of an economic slowdown in the 1870s, White participants in those industries felt pressured enough to employ racist imagery in an attempt to exclude Chinese competition from the marketplace.

In the British West Indies, the Chinese migrants were also described as being of “an enterprising race” and having a “strong commercial spirit”; it was also believed that they would inevitably leave the estates to establish their own businesses: “Where the Chinaman has other careers open to him besides that of working as a field labourer for wages, he invariably . . . rents a piece of ground near town, or starts a provision or retail shop as soon as possible” (Bowering to Malmsbury, 25 September 1852, PP vol. LXVIII; Look Lai, *The Chinese in the West Indies*, p. 81; Report of Commissioners, PP vol. XX). Unlike their contemporaries in California, however, White West Indian capitalists were not particularly concerned that the reputed

---

<sup>115</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 12 June 1860. At this time, Chinese women who had had their feet bound were described as “small footed”; those with unbound feet were “large footed”.

<sup>116</sup> Martin Brown and Peter Philips, ‘Competition, Racism and Hiring Practices Among California Manufacturers, 1860 – 1882’, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 40(1) (1996), 61 – 74.

enterprising natures of the Chinese would create additional competition for them. After all, the costs of starting up and running a plantation were at least, if not more prohibitive than running an industry like a mill or cannery.

Nevertheless, the image of the "Enterprising Chinese" was not free from negative associations, mainly because, as entrepreneurs, the Chinese left the plantations and it was mostly within the context of plantation space that Chinese images found their most favourable expression. Such negative imaging is apparent in James T. White's muted enthusiasm for Chinese immigration. Sent to China in the early 1850s to investigate the possibility of re-establishing Chinese migration, White warned that as estate-labourers, the Chinese

. . . may not prove so hardworking and industrious when placed in other circumstances and removed from the pressure of want. By habit and character they are essentially a commercial people, fond of traffic and barter, of shopkeeping and petty manufacturers, and all kinds of desultory employment . . . (White to Barkly, 21 August 1851, PP vol. LXVIII)

In this statement, being "commercial" is polarised against the positive attributes of "hardworking" and "industrious", both of which are directly associated with estate labour. As such, participation in commercial endeavours cannot be portrayed in a complimentary fashion; hence, the description of "desultory employment". Thus, the description of the Chinese as "a commercial people" must, in this context, be read as unflattering.

That positive representations of the Chinese in the West Indies were always related to the financial survival of the colonial order can also be demonstrated in the paucity of positive, much less any, images of Chinese women during this period. Certainly, the limited representations of nineteenth century Chinese women is related

to the simple fact that very few actually migrated to the British West Indies during this period. Indeed, the Colonial Office had been advised that “women *never* leave China” (Commissioners to Hope, 8 September 1843, PP vol. XXXV); however, women immigrants were needed because the Colonial Office hoped that the Chinese migrants would become settlers and provide a stable estate workforce. So desperate was the Colonial Office to encourage female and family migration that, in spite of fears that it would encourage kidnapping and virtual slavery of Chinese women, it allowed a cash bounty to be provided for female migrants. The Colonial Office also agreed that Chinese women, unlike their Indian counterparts, would not be bound to labour on the estates, although they would be bound to “residency”.

As primarily “residents” rather than labourers, the role afforded to Chinese women in nineteenth century West Indian colonial discourse was basically to anchor Chinese men on the estates. They were to keep them sexually satisfied or provide other assistance, such as working private provision grounds, which would help keep the men content. This resulted in two general depictions of Chinese women. The first was of *bona fide* wives who fulfilled their prescribed role. They receive brief praise when mention is made of them, but in general, disappear within colonial texts<sup>117</sup>. The second is of those women who fail to perform this role successfully. Their failure results in much less favourable depictions. For example, Joseph Beaumont, a staunch defender of the indentured immigrants, particularly the Chinese, described Chinese women in Guyana as “refuse”. Beaumont makes it clear that his opinion of them is based on the fact that they are

---

<sup>117</sup> In a similar fashion, White makes very little mention of Chinese women in his reports to the Colonial Office. A notable exception is his interest in the female members of a “floating population” only because they are “large footed” and appear “hard working and industrious”. In other words, they deserve mention because they might perform plantation labour (White to Barkly, 19 July 1851, PP vol. LXVIII).



. . . mere outcasts, filled into the ships by Chinese agency from the dregs of Chinese life, and in such respect of age and personal defects and infirmities, that to enumerate them in the proportion of women required for the help and solace of men seems like little better than mockery.<sup>118</sup>

Similarly the ship's surgeon for the *Whirlwind* complained that the Chinese women on board were not respectable wives, but merely members of the lowest classes who had been brought on board in order for the men to collect the bounty money. In particular, he noted that they consisted of "two notorious prostitutes, four idiots, one helpless cripple – one hunchback – one deaf and dumb, and several much disfigured by scars" (Look Lai, *Chinese in the West Indies*, p. 136)<sup>119</sup>. For both men, the Chinese women are represented as useless because they will not be able to provide "help and solace" for the Chinese labourers.

The connection between a positive representation for Chinese women and their contribution to keeping their countrymen content is also evident in the work of

---

<sup>118</sup> Joseph Beaumont, *The New Slavery. An Account of the Indian and Chinese Immigrants in Guyana* (London: W. Ridgway, 1871), p. 54. Further references to this work will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>119</sup> It appears that a significant number of women migrants from China were not true wives at all. The 1862 Report of the Agent General of Immigrants in Trinidad (Public Record Office, Colonial Office Correspondence 295/222) noted that the Chinese men had "for the most part, repudiated the wives whom they picked up at Hong Kong, more with a view of sharing in or appropriating their advance money". The report goes on to make the following observation:

These unfortunate females, bound by no indenture, have been thus thrown for support on most precarious resources. They do not, as a rule, appear willing to work, although many are physically able. Some have found employment among their previously settled countrymen, others have found a temporary asylum in the public hospitals, while the balance remain on the estates whither they were originally sent, working little and eking out a bare existence in doubtful ways. With the dry weather of next crop they will probably find suitable occupation during the manufacture of sugar on estates, or light labor in the corn and potatoe [*sic*] fields . . .

What happened to these women? Did they continue to support themselves by "doubtful ways"? Did they remain single or, because of the disproportionate number of Chinese men, were they quickly absorbed into the Chinese community, this time as "real" wives? The Colonial Office was clearly unconcerned with their fate as there is no follow-up report on the situation (Although Cecil Clementi reports that in 1865, the Chinese government disallowed providing bounties for women, p. 191). This disregard for the Chinese females might be partially connected to the fact that they were not labourers and as such, of no real importance to the Colonial Office. Indeed, the carelessness demonstrated towards these women points to the limited acceptance afforded to the Chinese community within

Edward Jenkins. Jenkins was sent from England to Guyana by the Anti-Slavery and Aborigine Protection Societies to represent the indentured immigrants during Royal Commission hearings into their treatment in 1871. Jenkins produced two pieces of work from this experience, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs*, a non-fiction piece and its companion novel in three volumes, *Lutchmee and Dilloo: A Study of West Indian Life*<sup>120</sup>. In *The Coolie*, Jenkins explicitly sets out the terms under which Chinese women in West Indian colonial imagination could be portrayed as valuable when he comments that "If not married, she may assist to keep her male fellow countrymen on the premises" (*The Coolie*, p. 242). He gives practical demonstration of this concept when recounting the story of Chee-Shee.

Chee-Shee is seduced from her husband and refuses to return to him, even though he is threatening to commit suicide. Jenkins reports that the estate's management would most likely become involved in the affair by transferring her lover to another plantation, thereby forcing Chee-Shee to return to her husband. For Jenkins and the estate's management, what is at issue in this situation is neither the personal feelings nor the freedom of choice of Chee-Shee; instead, it is the attempt to keep matters on the estate under control. Their only concern is whether the situation would interrupt work on the plantation<sup>121</sup>. Chee-Shee is portrayed negatively, not so much because she has left her husband, but because of the ramifications her behaviour might have on the estate's environment and, by extension, its production.

---

British West Indian discourse; that is, the Chinese community's position and the manner in which they were portrayed was always connected to their potential effect on the colonial order.

<sup>120</sup> Edward Jenkins, *Lutchmee and Dilloo. A Study of West Indian Life in Three Volumes*, (London: William Mullan & Son, 1877) and *The Coolie. His Rights and Wrongs* (London: Strahan & Co. Publishers, 1871). Further reference to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>121</sup> Indeed, the Commissioners were so concerned by the disturbances to estate work caused by such relationship breakdowns that they suggested penal provisions be created to punish seducers (Report of the Commissioners, PP vol. XX).



A similar attitude is revealed in a newspaper article reporting that a Chinese man was hiring out his wife on pay-day to other labourers<sup>122</sup>. Again, no real comment is made about the moral implications of the situation; neither are questions raised about whether or not the woman is participating out of her own free will or whether she has been made into a sexual slave. Instead, the article remains concerned only with how this activity might affect the behaviour of the men on the estate. In fact, the article seems to imply that, in this case, as long as the situation did not interfere with estate work, it would be ignored. By doing so, the article once again demonstrates that the positive or negative representation of Chinese women during this period was intrinsically bound to their impact upon the migrant workforce<sup>123</sup>.

The connection between positive representations of the Chinese and their contributions to the maintenance of the colonial financial order is also evident in the surprising willingness of colonial society to tolerate, excuse or ignore behaviour on the part of the Chinese community that did not fit into their moral framework. Before the first Chinese arrived in Trinidad, for example, the Colonial Office specifically instructed Trinidadians not to “interfere with them in the exercise of any Rights [sic] or Ceremony attached to or connected with their Worship”, even though to the Western mind, the “heathenism” and “paganism” of the Chinese was something that was generally cause either for derision or conversion<sup>124</sup>. More importantly, the

---

<sup>122</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 16 September 1869.

<sup>123</sup> In comparison, depictions of Chinese women in Australia and the United States appear much more consistently negative during the nineteenth century, a common image being that of the diseased prostitute (see, for example, Anderson, ‘The Idea of Chinatown’; Susan Craddock, ‘Embodying Place: Pathologizing Chinese and Chinatown in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco’, *Antipode*, 31(4) (1999), 351 – 391; and R.A. Huttenback, ‘The British Empire as a ‘White Man’s Country’ – Racial Attitudes and Immigration Legislation in the Colonies of White Settlement’, *Journal of British Studies*, 13(1) (1973), 108 – 137). This difference in portrayal re-emphasises the idea that positive representation for Chinese women in the West, like their male counterparts, was dependent on whether they were perceived to be supporting the established social and economic order.

<sup>124</sup> Extract from the minutes of a meeting at His Majesty’s Council, 17 October 1806, Public Record Office, Colonial Office CO 295/14. Further reference to this collection will be given after quotation in the text.



general colonial community was willing to excuse more disruptive, unattractive and ethically questionable behaviour on the part of some members of the Chinese community so long as it did not interfere with their work on the estates. Some religious leaders, drawing on the image of the "heathen Chinee", raised concerns that the introduction of "a most ingenious, but a most depraved and unprincipled race" would have a negative effect on the moral environment of the colonies and, more specifically, on the moral development of the Blacks<sup>125</sup>. As one reverend put it:

Much might be said on this subject [the moral aspect of Chinese immigration]. We might speak of the worse than folly of importing idolaters amongst a people, whose nascent morality was testified to by governors and magistrates in every island of the West Indies; something might be said of forms of vice unknown amongst the negroes introduced by the Coolies and Chinese; something also of infanticide as was well known to prevail amongst these people; of the nameless vices caused by the immense disproportion of the sexes; of the introduction and open practice of idolatrous festivals . . . (Barrett, pp. 22 – 23)

The arrival of the Chinese did seem to realise some of these fears. They were quickly blamed for introducing gambling and opium-smoking, along with the crimes associated with such activities. They were also regularly accused of being directly engaged in criminal activity, such as theft and murder, proving especially problematic in Guyana where they were notorious for roaming the countryside in gangs where their weapon of choice was apparently cutlasses attached to the ends of long sticks. Nevertheless, such activities were routinely downplayed and regarded as mere inconveniences attached to their invaluable service on the sugar estates. For example, the *Royal Gazette* admitted that the Chinese seemed to have a propensity for gambling and thieving, but argued that neither activity lessened their value as labourers<sup>126</sup>. Similarly, a missionary described the Chinese as "a blight, a stain and a disgrace to

---

<sup>125</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 5 March, 1853.

the Christian land in which they live”, but, a few lines later stated that although “ . . . in a moral point of view, the bodily presence of the Chinese is not advantageous, yet they are unmistakably good labourers” (Bronkhurst, p. 114). A newspaper editorial’s response to complaints about the new migrants makes the restrictive conditions in which flattering images of the Chinese could be created even more clear when it claimed that: “ . . . after a time they will learn their real position and . . . settle down quietly into their proper places, and provide a good addition to our population”<sup>127</sup>. For the Chinese to be portrayed as “a good addition” to West Indian society, they must “settle down quietly into their proper places” as unobtrusive labourers. Thus, in texts like *The Coolie*, Chinese individuals who reject the role of labourer can not be presented as “good additions” to the general community.

In *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, Jenkins complains that the Chinese are “a hopeless dead-weight to managers and overseers” (*Lutchmee and Dilloo*, vol. 1, p. 185). It is an image that reappears consistently throughout *The Coolie*. In this piece, Jenkins makes repeated complaints that the Chinese are more “independent” – that is, less submissive and controllable – than the Indians in terms of their attitude towards estate labour. In particular, Jenkins notes with evident displeasure an incident that occurred during a tour he made of sugar plantations. While being shown around an estate, he and the manager came across a group of Chinese ladies amusing themselves. This in itself does not seem to be a particular concern for Jenkins; after all, Chinese women were not bound to labour on estates. What appears to annoy him, however, is that amongst the women is an apparently healthy Chinese man who is simply relaxing and enjoying the afternoon in their company. Even worse, when the manager makes a subtle hint that he should be working, the man responds coolly, “No. No think work”

---

<sup>126</sup> See editorials in *Royal Gazette*, 12 February 1859 and 31 July 1860.

(*The Coolie*, p. 65). What is at issue for Jenkins is that this representative of the Chinese community has apparently refused his "proper place" in colonial society as a labourer. As such, he has also removed himself from the possibility of being portrayed as a "good addition" to the community.

It is the same issue that prevents Jenkins from portraying his one major Chinese character in *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, Chin-a-foo, more generously. Not only does Chin-a-foo run a gambling establishment to the detriment of other labourers, he has abandoned any attempt to work on the estate. In fact, Jenkins specifies that during slow periods at his gambling den, Chin-a-foo does not take up estate work; instead, he supports himself by hunting in the bush. Chin-a-foo's establishment is also placed significantly on the farthest edges of the estate – on the borderline between the symbol of civilisation, the estate, and the forest, the symbol of primeval savagery. In this manner, he becomes as much an emblem of barbarity and depravity and a threat to colonial order and civilisation as the African Obeah man in whose presence Dilloo's death and final rejection of the Christian God are enacted. Chin-a-foo's decidedly negative representation in contrast to positive depictions of the Chinese elsewhere in West Indian colonial discourse reveals that neither the positive nor negative images of the Chinese are absolute; rather they are prone to shifts depending on how the images can be manipulated to support the colonial order. This ambiguity is also evident in the images created of the Chinese that were used to signify White superiority.

---

<sup>127</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 12 May, 1860.



## **“Leprous Mongolians”: Signifying White Superiority**

One of the most common nineteenth century images of the Chinese in Western discourses was as a dirty and diseased being. In San Francisco, it was said of the Chinese that “. . . their habits and manner of life [were of] such a character as to breed and engender disease wherever they reside”; “Their filthy habits were . . . well known” in New South Wales; while Vancouver’s Chinatown was described as “... an ulcer lodged like a piece of wood in the tissues of the human body, which unless treated must cause disease in places around it and ultimately to the whole body” (Craddock, p. 357; Huttenback, p. 112; Anderson, p. 586). On both sides of the border in the North American West, the Chinese were accused of being the source of small pox epidemics, even though medical evidence suggested otherwise. Indeed, the widespread image of the Chinese as a site of contagion was summed up succinctly by a Royal Commission in Canada when it wrote:

With their habits of overcrowding, and utter disregard for all sanitary laws, they are a continual menace to health. From a moral and social point of view, living as they do without home life, schools or churches, and so nearly approaching a servile class, their effect upon the rest of the community is bad . . . (Anderson, p. 580)

Literary representations of the period reinforced this image. In ‘A Golden Shanty’, the Chinese camp is described as “. . . a cluster of frail ramshackle huts, compiled of slabs, scraps of matting, zinc, and gunny-bag”. No pity is shown for the obvious poverty of the Chinese miners. Rather, it is implied that filth is their natural habitat in the subsequent line:

These were the habitations of a colony of squalid, gibbering Chinese fossickers, who herded together like hogs in a crowded pen, as if they had been restricted to that spot on the pain of death, or its equivalent, a washing. (Dyson, ‘Golden Shanty’, p. 251)

It is not surprising then, that the leader of the Chinese miners is a “pocked-marked leper” or that Doyle’s low finances would be described as being so small that they were not even enough to have “kept a Chinaman in soap” (ibid., pp. 256 and 257).

In ‘Ah Ling, the Leper’, Dyson’s imagery becomes even darker<sup>128</sup>. Ah Ling lives in a “dark fetid alley”, “a hovel reeking pestilence”, and, as a leper, is himself, “ill-omened and unclean” (‘Ah Ling’). What makes Ah Ling more dangerous than the Chinese in ‘A Golden Shanty’, however, is that he directly threatens to contaminate the White Australian community because his furniture makes its way from his “infected den” to blissfully ignorant happy homes (ibid.).

What these images have in common is that they transform fear of financial competition into anxiety over physical contamination in the same way that the Californian cigar-makers accused the Chinese as being leprous in the attempt to drive them out of the cigar industry. Dirt and disease become an effective means of justifying attempts to force the Chinese out of business and, in more extreme cases, out of the country. It is hardly a coincidence, for example, that articles in the *Vancouver News* were describing Chinatown in terms like “hateful haunts” and “pest-producing” the same year that 300 rioters destroyed the Chinese camp (Anderson, pp. 582, 586). Indeed, as Susan Craddock concluded in her study of nineteenth century San Francisco, “. . . the targeting of the Chinese as a source of small pox served as a more powerful political tool than accusations of job stealing” (Craddock, p. 355).

The reputed uncleanness of the Chinese and their reported diseased state, was transformed into a metaphor of moral filth that provided further justification for discrimination against the Chinese. In this regard, particular attention was paid to Chinese prostitutes – “leprous Mongolian viragoes”– in British Columbia and

California where they were accused of being a moral menace in addition to spreading disease (Huttenback, p. 132). The Vancouver branch of the Dominion Trades and Labor Congress even made the dramatic claim that the Chinese community was one of the causes of divorce in the city when it accused Chinese servants of drugging their male employers “. . . thus placing the female members of the household at their disposal and unscrupulous will” (ibid., p. 132). Such images allowed a member of the New South Wales legislature to feel that he could support discriminatory legislation against the Chinese on that grounds that it would supposedly protect White Australia’s moral clime:

Their habits, morally speaking were so filthy, that they set so bad an example to our children with whom they sought to associate that, although he was no advocate for protection as far as trade was concerned, he was certainly an advocate for protecting our population from an infernal nuisance as the Chinese undoubtedly were. (ibid., p. 112)

In the West Indies, the fabrication and dissemination of images of the Chinese as particularly squalid do not appear with the same level of intensity<sup>129</sup>. In general, little mention is made of Chinese standards of physical cleanliness except to reinforce the idea that the Indian and Black labouring classes were inferior to the Chinese. It was said, for example, that the Chinese were “cleanlier” than the Indians and that their houses were “models of cleanliness and order” (Barkly to Newcastle, 16 February 1854, PP vol. XXVII). A lack of physical cleanliness was not the grounds on which West Indian colonial discourse based the claim of White superiority. Instead, White

---

<sup>128</sup> Edward Dyson, ‘Ah Ling, the Leper’, *Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002). Further references to this poem will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>129</sup> There does, however seem to be a certain assumption that the Chinese have a low standard of cleanliness. An editorial complaining about the general sanitary conditions in Guyana commented that the Chinese area of Charlestown had some health issues, but claimed “they of all people were scarcely expected to have any clear ideas of municipal order or sanitary regulations” (editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 21 August 1871).



dominance was asserted on the basis of Chinese moral filth. In this way, West Indian representations of the Chinese fell in line with those in the United States, Australia and Canada – the Chinese were deemed “low in the scale of moral advancement. They are ignorant, degraded people, filthy in habits . . .” (Bronkhurst, p. 104). They were, in other words, a people in need of control.

Even before the Chinese arrived in the West Indies, they had a reputation for moral depravity that exhibited itself through violence. In addition to reports of the Chinese emanating from China, this image was undoubtedly fostered by the incidents of mutiny and other disturbances that had occurred on ships carrying Chinese labourers to the West Indies, particularly to Cuba<sup>130</sup>. Once in the West Indies, the Chinese migrants had an early reputation for violence. It was also said that they were peculiarly sensitive to insult – “. . . that they are prone to violent combinations, but only when their peculiar feelings are not respected . . .” – and that, if they felt insulted, their first reaction was to resort to violence<sup>131</sup>. Newspaper articles of the period implied that incidents that would otherwise have been easily settled were aggravated to higher levels by the Chinese’s “natural” inclination towards violent confrontation. In Guyana, for example, it was reported that a Black man was struck by a Chinese man in a dispute over some owed money. When the Black man’s son intervened to defend his father, the Chinese man and his companion left, returning soon afterwards with a gang of their countrymen to challenge the Black men. From Trinidad came the more bizarre story about two Chinese men who entered a Black

---

<sup>130</sup> In fact, the *Samuel Boddington’s*, ship’s surgeon reported considerable fighting amongst the emigrants and a thwarted mutiny before it arrived in Guyana in March 1853 (Barkly to Newcastle, 12 March 1853, PP vol. LXVIII). Just over a decade later, the ship’s surgeon on the *Persia*, resorted to caning to control the migrants (see Clementi, pp. 128 – 131). So established was the image of “the utter irresponsibility of Chinese morality” that residents of Guyana readily believed a false rumour that the captain and crew of the *Lucknow* had been murdered by their Chinese passengers (editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 7 July 1853). Interestingly, the ship’s surgeon on the *Clarendon* claimed to have discovered the means of containing Chinese violence on board ship: overfeeding them (‘Trinidad – The Chinese’, *Royal Gazette*, 7 July 1853).

man's home, apparently to watch him beat his wife. When the Black man pushed them out, they too were so insulted by this treatment that they rounded up a group of other Chinese to assist them in their attempt to assault the man. So fierce was the reputation of the Chinese community at this time that another observer claimed that "The negro population, who make a butt of the patient Hindoo and bully his life out of him, are afraid of the Chinaman, and leave him alone" (Kirke, p. 216).

In *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, Jenkins also portrays the Chinese community as entirely more violent and dangerous than their Indian counterparts. In the *mêlée* that occurs when an attempt is made to arrest Chin-a-foo, for example, the Indian participants are depicted as being quickly shamed into orderly behaviour and meekly depart the scene. In contrast, the Chinese go back to their quarters "where they prepared for a desperate resistance to the now inevitable visit of the police" (Jenkins, *Lutchmee*, vol. 1, p. 223). Similarly, whenever the novel portrays unrest amongst the indentured labourers, the Indians are always described as having to retrieve their weapons. The Chinese, however, always have their weapons, namely long knives, on hand, and are prepared to enter immediately into violent confrontation. In fact, the long description of Chin-a-foo that accompanies his introduction in the text not only makes him appear physically and morally repulsive, it climaxes with the words, "concealed under the wide paejamas [*sic*], was a knife about two inches broad and fifteen long, tapering to its end, and kept in a state of suspicious brightness" (*ibid.*, p. 204). The concealed knife thus becomes a metaphor for the violent nature of the Chinese which is itself kept barely concealed<sup>132</sup>. Such depictions, demonstrating an extremity of violence and a seeming nonchalance with which it was enacted,

---

<sup>131</sup> 'The Chinese Labourers in the West Indies', *Royal Gazette*, 16 February 1854.

<sup>132</sup> Similarly, nineteenth century texts reveal a very real fear of what the Chinese literally "had up their sleeves" in the repeated image of the threateningly mysterious sleeves on Chinese garments.

constructed a frightening image of the Chinese in the West Indies as a people who required White control.

A more common image used to assert White superiority was that of the Chinese as inherently deceptive and cunning. In Harte's work, for example, despite his basically sympathetic attitude towards his Chinese characters, they are, in general, all liars. In fact, not only do they engage in deceptions and lies, they do so with a casualness that suggests it is their natural state. This is suggested in 'See Yup' when the title character sends a camelia japonica to the narrator. The narrator realises the flowers are a fake, "ingeniously constructed of thin slices of potato, marvelously cut to imitate the vegetable waxiness and formality of the real flower"(Harte, 'See Yup', p. 147). Rather than accepting this as a simple act of handicraft, the narrator is unsure as to "whether he had tried to deceive me, or whether he only wished me to admire his skill" (ibid.). Similarly, dishonesty is everyday behaviour for both Li Tee and Wan Lee<sup>133</sup>. Li Tee's immediate response to the editor's dilemma about how to write an article on a radish he has never seen is "S'pose you lie", while Wan Lee shows no sense of guilt when he steals the neighbour's eggs or the mail (Harte, 'Vagabonds', p. 187).

Australian depictions of the Chinese correspond to those in the United States in that they also portray inveterate thieves and tricksters. In 'A Golden Shanty', not only do the Chinese attempt to rob Doyle out of the gold that exists in the bricks of his house, their arrival is accompanied by "the mysterious disappearance of small valuables from the premises" (Dyson, 'Golden Shanty', p. 252). Similarly, in Brunton

---

These sleeves suggest potential violence, as in the case of Chin-a-foo and/or potential deception, as in the case of Ah Sin.

<sup>133</sup> Bret Harte, 'Three Vagabonds of Trinidad', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XVII, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 186 – 201 and 'Wan Lee, the Pagan', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. II, Standard Library Edition (Boston and



Stephens poem 'My Chinee Cook', the respectful, pious, and hardworking cook also turns out to be a thief<sup>134</sup>.

The association of deception with the Chinese was also well-established in the West Indies; so much so that G. W. Des Voeux, former stipendiary magistrate of Guyana, recounts an incident of Chinese honesty in his memoirs as an oddity. He had lent two Chinese men money so that they could buy a lot in Hopetown. When the endeavour did not work out to be as financially productive as they had hoped, the men re-indentured themselves so that they could pay back the loan with the bounty money. Similarly, Beaumont, a former chief justice in Guyana, also complained that West Indians' assumption that the Chinese were habitual liars interfered with the delivery of justice in the colony. To back up his complaint, Beaumont relates a story about a case in which the Chinese defendant claimed he could not have committed the alleged crime because he had been in jail at the time. Much to the disgust of the general public in the courtroom and the jury – who Beaumont believes were ready to return a guilty verdict – Beaumont delayed the proceedings to investigate the defendant's claim, which turned out to be true. Men like Beaumont and Des Voeux were in the minority, however, in their willingness to consider that not every Chinese person was a liar. More common were the attitudes revealed towards Chinese complaints during the Royal Commission investigation into the indentured system in Guyana in 1871.

Although he was acting on behalf of the indentured labourers, Jenkins was surprisingly dismissive of the complaints that the Chinese labourers laid before the Commission. Jenkins suggested that the majority of these complaints simply

---

New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 262 – 279. References to these stories will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>134</sup> Stephens, James Brunton, "My Chinee Cook", *The Poetical Works of Brunton Stephens* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002). Further references to this poem will be given after quotation in the text.

demonstrated “Asiatic ingenuity and craft” (Jenkins, *The Coolie*, p. 149)<sup>135</sup>. In support of his opinion, Jenkins claimed that all the stories the Chinese migrants had told him of Chinese murders and suicides on the estates had proved false. The Commissioner’s official report reveals this same tendency to easily dismiss the complaints of the Chinese on the assumption that they are untrue. For example, two charges brought against the indenture process were that the Chinese had been promised back passage and had been lied to about the amount of money they would be able to make on the plantations. The Commissioners claimed, however, that the promised amounts were not inflated by recruiters but, rather, that physical weakness of the Chinese labourer prevented him from earning the advertised amounts. With regard to the return passage, the Commissioners suggested that the Chinese only began to complain that they had been deceived once they arrived in the colonies and learned that such a provision was included in the contracts with Indian immigrants. Interestingly, the Commissioners come to this conclusion after an interview with a group of Chinese who apparently initially indicated that promotional recruitment material in China had promised that they would be “free to return”, but, after further questioning, claimed that it actually said “free return”. Nonetheless, the Commissioners never consider the possibility that language barriers might have caused some misunderstanding or confusion regarding the terms of return in their quickness to identify Chinese deception as the root of the problem.

The Commissioners also warn that when members of an estate’s management are convicted of abuses against the Chinese, it should not be assumed that they are guilty of all the charges brought against them. They suggest that the Chinese

---

<sup>135</sup> Similarly, Jenkins describes woodcuttings produced by a Chinese individual detailing abuses under the indenture system (see Appendix B, p. v) as showing “quaint artistic ingenuity” that gives “an idea of the shrewdness and cunning ability which are common to all these Asiatic immigrants

“padded” their complaints with exaggerated abuses or outright lies. Again, so convinced are the Commissioners that the Chinese are simply natural liars that they never wonder why the Chinese might engage in such a practice. They never query, for example, if such dramatic charges might be made to ensure an official investigation into conditions on an estate. Finally, the Commissioners report that one of the hospitals on an estate lacked the required number of blankets. Estate management first tried to excuse the situation by claiming that Guyana was too hot for blankets, but later accounted for the lack of blankets by claiming that the Chinese kept stealing them. The Commissioners only response to the statement is the cryptic comment: “The Chinese are accused of being great pilferers, but if blankets are not used, it is strange that they should be worth stealing” (Report of the Commissioners, PP vol. XX). It is difficult to tell if the Commissioners are finding the excuse strange or if they are finding it peculiar, albeit typical, that the Chinese would steal the blankets.

The representations of the Chinese as essentially dishonest and violent also underpinned what was some of the strongest evidence put forth in colonial discourse to justify the economic, political and social domination of the White elements of West Indian society, namely the non-Christian status of the Chinese. The argument for the inferiority of Chinese religions was grounded on the claim that they did not appear to effect a moral change in the behaviour of the Chinese. They remained liars, thieves and cutthroats:

. . . and comparing the minuteness of the enactments of their penal code in regard to the strict observance of morals with their actual attainments, they may be said to present a most striking illustration of the utter incompetency of legislation, unaided by the influence of religious principle, to produce anything like real social virtue amongst men . . . The religion of the Chinese may be broadly defined as a system of superstition intimately connected with ceremonial

---

in stating and systematizing their grievances”. He also considers the woodcuttings to be a humorous treatment of the issue (*The Coolie*, pp. 9 and 13).



The assumption of religious superiority is revealed clearly in Harte's writing for although often serving as a condemnation of so-called Christians who do not behave in accordance with the tenets of Christianity, Harte's fiction never actually criticises Christianity itself. In comparison, elements of Chinese religions are repeatedly disparaged in his work. In the same manner, the guardians of both Wan Lee and Li Tee make every effort to place their charges within Christian homes so that they can be "under gently restraining influences, of subjecting [them] to a life and experience that would draw out of [them] what good [their] superficial care and ill-regulated kindness could not reach" (Harte, 'Wan Lee', p. 277). In Australia, Dyson's representation of innate inferiority of the Chinese in terms of religion is less subtle than Harte – he keeps using the words "heathen" and "pagan" as general terms of disparagement in his work. In 'A Golden Shanty', for example, these words appear at least nine times in a story that is a mere ten pages long.

Another manner in which West Indian colonial discourses justified the idea of Christian superiority over Chinese spiritual beliefs was to insist that the Chinese were in need of conversion<sup>136</sup>. Thus, a continuing theme throughout nineteenth century texts was that immigration was good for the moral conditions of the Chinese because it would inevitably, in some never clearly explained fashion, bring about the conversion of the new migrants. It was confidently claimed, for example, that once in the West Indies, the Chinese would " . . . very soon from Conviction embrace a persuasion established in the Divine Principles of General and Universal Benevolence

---

<sup>136</sup> That this image was also a manifestation of colonial discourse is evident in its high instability; that is, on occasion the Chinese were portrayed as being highly involved in Christianity, other times as pagans. Their depiction depended on which image best suited the needs of colonial

and Charity in preference to a Continuance in their own Incongruous and [illegible word] Doctrines”; “unlearn something of the practices of their own country, and be brought into contact with the influences of Christianity and of a civilization comparatively European”; and “under the influence of a civilized condition of a society, forego their home and forget their gods” <sup>137</sup>. More specifically:

The defenders of the Asiatic immigration to the West Indies have always been careful to point out, besides the material advantages offered to the immigrant, the prospect of moral improvement which it opened to the races. It has been held upon as a means of carrying Western civilization and even Western faith to the nations of India and China . . . (Report of the Commission, PP vol. XX)

The desire to represent the Chinese as inferior to the Whites sprang from the fact that British West Indian colonial societies were understood to be organised hierarchically, with Europeans at the top and the Black slaves at the bottom. European domination extended beyond the obvious political and economic arenas to the social and cultural spheres of life. At the same time, however, fragments of African cultural heritage continued to make their presence felt in language, food, music, and forms of religious worship amongst a significant proportion of the numerically dominant Black population. Colonial discourse was therefore forced to continually denigrate and disparage the presence of such African elements within West Indian space to ensure that the European elements could retain their position of supremacy. An effective means of asserting European dominance was by portraying the new Chinese immigrants as accepting European norms and values rather than the more African-derived elements of West Indian creole culture. These depictions reinforced the social hierarchy by implying that the Chinese recognised the superiority of the European

---

discourse. As is also evident in this chapter, the same ambivalence can be found in the images of the Chinese either assimilating to Western styles of clothing or retaining their traditional dress.

<sup>137</sup> Minutes, PRO CO 295/14; ‘Report of Trinidad’s Standing Committee’, *Royal Gazette*, 15 August 1860; editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 16 July 1853.

contributions to West Indian life. In this regard, the image of the conversion of "the Heathen Chinese" to Christianity was one of the most important images used to support the colonial order.

As early as 1853, an explicit link between positive representations of the Chinese in the West Indies and their involvement with Christianity was being made. In Guyana, Governor Barkly, enthused that the first Chinese immigrants were "participating in the services at a missionary chapel", a fact that leads directly to his conclusion that "the Chinese posses the energy and the intelligence attributed to them" (Barkly to Newcastle, 26 February 1853, PP vol. LXVIII). More typically, favourable representations of the Chinese were grounded in a contrast with the Indian immigrants who were proving less amenable to conversion. For example, it was suggested that China was a better source of emigrants than India because the Chinese were, amongst other things, seemingly more willing to accept Christian instruction. Similarly, a missionary described the Chinese as pious and *gentil* in comparison to the Indians (described as "egotistic and essentially a mendicant"), on the basis of the money they gave to the church (Look Lai, *The Chinese*, pp. 212 and 218). A newspaper article reporting on an execution of an Indian and a Chinese migrant provides a much more dramatic contrast between the Indian and Chinese attitudes towards Christianity. On their last night alive, the Indian migrant refused to listen to any clergymen, spending his final hours dancing in his cell; in contrast, the Chinese prisoner spent the night attentively listening to the prayers of the Roman Catholic priest who eventually accompanied him on the scaffold<sup>138</sup>.

The reification of the European-dominated colonial order was also accomplished by presenting images of the Chinese absorbing other aspects of

---

<sup>138</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 22 March 1870.



European cultural norms. For example, a surprising amount of attention was given to reporting that the Chinese community was dressing in accordance with European standards of fashion. During his tour of Trinidad, for example, Kingsley commented that Chinese women at a church service were attired in expensive European-styled finery, whilst in Guyana, Barkly was pleased to report that the Chinese there were purchasing articles of European clothing. Kirke also recounts a story of a dinner hosted by a Chinese man at which he was served Hennessy's XXX brandy. More importantly in this regard, Kirke reports his host's reaction to the suggestion that Chinese eat dogs. The host becomes quite agitated, insisting that only "bad" Chinese do so. This division between "good" and "bad" Chinese on the grounds of whether or not they behaved in accordance with European standards, demonstrates clearly that the host understood the terms under which the Chinese could be presented as "good" within nineteenth century colonial discourse. Simply put, the "good" Chinese was the assimilated Chinese.

The moral superiority accorded to the White element of West Indian society in discourse was also justified by giving them a moral responsibility for those of the "lower orders" and "lesser civilizations". Their positions of privilege were deemed to have been earned by this responsibility. Such a belief had early been embedded within the immigration process. For example, Kenneth MacQueen, labour recruitment officer for the Colonial Office in the early nineteenth century, warned that the estate owners would need to guard against the Chinese falling into their "Habits of Debauchery" and to ensure that they would not become "a licentious class of people without principle or subordination" (Minutes, PRO CO 295/14). In other words, without the guardianship of the Whites, the Chinese would degrade (like the "Lazy Negro") into their "naturally" evil states. Such an image underpins much of Jenkins' work.

*Lutchmee and Dilloo* is based on a moral hierarchy which identifies the White West Indian as the superior element in society and puts a moral responsibility on him in this position. Indeed, the point of the novel is not only to condemn abuses in the indenture system, but to hold the Whites directly accountable for them. This is done by depicting Dilloo's degeneration from noble savage to savage murderer who rejects Christianity on the basis of his experience with so-called Christian civilisation. Jenkins holds up Craige's relationship with Lutchmee as an example of the proper relationship that Whites should have to creatures of "stunted mental and moral natures" who "stand half-way between the Adamite ideal and the pure, unspiritual brutish [nature] of lower animals" (Jenkins, *Lutchmee*, vol. 1, p. 113). In contrast, estate manager Drummond has abandoned his moral responsibilities; he clearly is engaged in a sexual relationship with his Black housekeeper, for example, and would like to have the same relationship with Lutchmee. As a result of Drummond's failure to act as moral guardian for those under his care, moral corruption, including the existence of Chin-a-foo and his gambling establishment, enters the community.

The subservient position of the Chinese to the Europeans that colonial discourse asserted was captured in a common image used to represent what was deemed to be the proper relationship between the two groups, namely that of parent and child. Certainly, in fiction, Lutchmee and Craig's relationship is depicted in these terms; however, it was also commonly understood that the Immigration Office stood in *loco parentis* for the immigrants. This image provided an effective means of rendering violent or disturbing behaviour on the part of the Chinese as innocuous. In other words, since the Chinese were represented as children, their behaviour could be seen as tantrums, the activity of unruly children who needed only good discipline to adjust their behaviour. Indeed, some estates were accused of "spoiling" their Chinese

labourers with over-indulgence and incidents of Chinese unrest on the plantations were often blamed on poorly developed managerial skills on those estates rather than understood to be conscious acts of resistance to an abusive system. So accepted was the analogy of the parent-child relationship that the *Guiana Times* could confidently assert that:

. . . a Chinaman is naturally most tractable, and is never so happy and contented, as when he is earning money, and has at the same time some one who will take the complete management of him, so that he can rely upon this some one to think for him, and deal with him, just as a father does to a child . . .<sup>139</sup>

It was also important to produce images of the Chinese accepting their inferior status in relation to the Whites. Thus, one of the grounds put forth in support of Chinese immigration was the claim that the Chinese were “ . . . fully alive to the necessity of authority for their regulation and control” (White to Barkly, 21 June 1851, PP vol. LXVIII). Harte’s work provides a dramatic example of the recognition of inferiority on the part of the Chinese in ‘Three Vagabonds of Trinidad’. The story is one of Harte’s stronger criticism of the attitude and behaviour demonstrated by White Christians towards the “outcasts of civilization”, in this case a Chinese youth and a native American, and the ill-effects that such a rejection of their moral responsibility has on these lower orders (Harte, ‘Vagabonds’, p. 190). In the story, Li Tee and Injin Jim, hide out on an island after Li Tee makes the unfortunate mistake of using a washing line – complete with his hostess’ “unmentionables” still hanging from it – as a tail for his kite. Their hideout is visited by a young White boy, Bob Skinner with whom Li Tee and Injin Jim have a strange relationship. When Bob leaves the camp, Harte writes that for Jim and Li Tee

---

<sup>139</sup> Reprinted in Trev Sue-A-Quan, *Cane Reapers. Chinese Indentured Immigrants in Guyana* (Vancouver: Riftwood Publishing, 1999), p. 164.



. . . a little of the sunlight had gone from it . . . for they were in a dull stupid way fascinated by the little white tyrant who had broken bread with them. He had been delightfully selfish and frankly brutal to them, as only a schoolboy could be, with the addition of the consciousness of his superior race. Yet they each longed for his return . . . (ibid., p. 195).

Similar images of Chinese acknowledgement of European authority also appear in the West Indies. For example, Beaumont records an incident in which Chinese labourers decided to leave their estate in the country and walk to Georgetown to lodge a complaint with the Immigration Agent. Travelling *en masse*, the labour gang was eventually confronted by a sole British policeman, who, more by the authority of his position as an Englishman than his role as a policeman, is able to control them without resorting to force.

It is this understanding of the presumed inferiority of the Chinese to Whites that at least partially accounts for the extremely negative tone in which the Chinese migrants who arrived in Guyana on the *Corona* are described in both Kirke's memoirs and local newspaper reports. At issue is the fact that this group of migrants does not seem to understand its place; that is, they do not demonstrate an acceptable level of deference towards the Whites. Instead, they wander about town like tourists, freely entering buildings and examining both people and objects with a confidence that is off-putting to the colonials they encounter. The *Royal Gazette* complained that the Chinese had demonstrated a "nonchalance amounting in some cases to positive impertinence" and exhibited a "patronising air". The authors conclude that obviously, the Chinese had mistaken the kindness of the colonials "for inference to themselves as persons of consequence"<sup>140</sup>. In a sense, Kirke takes it upon himself to put the Chinese back into their place when, in his recollection of the incident, he includes the comment that, upon encountering a locomotive engine, the Chinese worshipped it as a

god. By doing so, Kirke resurrects the image of "the Heathen Chinees" and re-affirms both the superior intelligence and moral status of the White West Indian.

The other important area that required justification within colonial discourse with regard to the different positions of power and prestige in West Indian society, was the positioning of the Chinese on a higher level than the Black labouring masses in the colonial hierarchy. Such justification was found partially in the concept of the "Lazy Negro" discussed earlier, but, it was also expressed in moral terms. During the nineteenth century, arguments were being made that labour, especially with regard to the so-called "lower orders", was a divinely appointed duty. It was on this basis, for example, that Carlyle argued that the ex-slaves in the West Indies should be compelled to work for their daily bread: "This is the everlasting duty of all men, black or white, who are born into this world. To do competent work, to labor honestly according to the ability given to them, for that, and for no other purpose, was each one of us sent into this world" (Carlyle).

Indeed, the perceived link between labour and moral development also played a central role in discussions over whether or not indentured immigration should be introduced into the West Indian colonies. It was argued that because the ex-slaves were not working, at least in the manner that the planters desired, they were degrading into a state of savagery and immorality. For example, in a letter demanding governmental support for the planters, the Earl of Derby quoted Governor Barkly as stating that:

. . . the negroes, instead of having made a great advance in civilization, as might have been hoped, during the 15 years which have elapsed since their emancipation, have on the contrary, rather retrograded than improved; and that they are now, as a body, less amendable than they were when that great change took place to the restraints of religion and of law – less docile and tractable, and almost

---

<sup>140</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 10 March 1874.

as ignorant, and as much subject as ever to the degrading superstitions which their fathers brought with them from Africa. (Stanley, *Claims and Resources*, pp. 7 – 8)

Since the Chinese were being portrayed as more industrious than the Blacks, they could also be depicted as a force preserving morality in the West Indian colonies. It was their alleged industry, in other words, that meant that the Chinese could be described as “the salvation” of the colonies in both financial and moral terms (Bronkhurst, p. 99). Such images also positioned the Chinese community as a moral and financial “middleman” group in society, between the superior Whites and the inferior Blacks. Together, such representations reinforced the idea of a colonial hierarchy and were integral to its maintenance. In this sense, the Chinese were represented as belonging to the colonial order within West Indian space, albeit, belonging to their own defined position within its boundaries.

### “D’hirty Haythen Furriners”: The Inassimilable “Other”

The moral hierarchy set up in the colonial discourse was based on an essential “othering” of the Chinese used to define an identity of White superiority and to justify the privileges accorded to that identity. Because of the power issues at stake, the boundaries between the groups in the colonial hierarchy needed to be clearly marked out. Representations of the Chinese played an important role in this regard. By focussing on their exotic difference and insisting on their fundamental inability to be assimilated, particularly when combined with the idea of the Chinese as a middleman strata, these depictions became key component in preserving the boundaries of colonial status quo.

The concept that the Chinese could not be assimilated into Western culture was common throughout many of the locations to which the Chinese had been



migrating during the nineteenth century. A typical example of this opinion were the words of a Royal Commission in Canada when they wrote about the Chinese:

They form, on their arrival, a community within a community, separate and apart, a foreign substance within but not of our body politic; with no love for our laws or institutions; a people that cannot assimilate and become an integral part of our race and nation. (Anderson, p. 580)

'A Golden Shanty' also reinforces the image of Chinese as inassimilable by consistently referring to them as outsiders, "invaders" specifically, an image that essentially defines Australia as White space. Thus, Doyle, himself an Irish immigrant, recognises no irony when he denounces his Chinese neighbours as "dhirty haythen furriners" (ibid., p. 253). In the West Indies, however, the idea of the Chinese as a distinct group was actually a means of incorporating them into the overall structure of the colonies rather than simply marking them out as outsiders. They were the "inside outsiders": included inside the colonial order as a significant means of promoting stability whilst at the same time, portrayed as distinct from other groups in colonial hierarchy and, to a certain extent, outside of the tensions between them.

The earliest Chinese immigrants to the West Indies arrived as part of a scheme that was a direct response to the fear of slave rebellions and a desire to maintain slave-based economies in the West Indian colonies. This agenda is explicitly revealed in commentary written by the Colonial Office early in the nineteenth century:

The events which have recently happened at St. Domingo . . . render it indispensable that every practicable measure of precaution should be adopted to guard the British possessions in the West Indies as well against any future indisposition of power so constituted as against the danger of a spirit of insurrection amongst the Negroes.

It is conceived that no measure would so effectively tend to provide a security against the danger, as that of introducing a free race of cultivators into our islands who, from habits and feelings would be kept distinct from the Negroes and who from interests would be inseparably attached to European proprietors . . . (Hislop, 16 April 1806, PRO CO 295/14)

Similarly, one year after the first Chinese labourers had arrived in Trinidad, the programme was described as "one of the best possible schemes" specifically because the presence of the Chinese in the colony was said to provide "a strength far beyond what the other colonies possess [for it] will be a barrier between us and the negroes . . . to whom they will always offer a formidable opposition" (Gloster to Marryat, 3 April 1807, *ibid.*). The Chinese were, in other words, portrayed as a buffer zone who

. . . being unconnected with the African Slaves, and entirely distinct from them in their Customs and manners, gradually create a Strength which will form a Counterpose to them, and prevent a Reoccurrence of the Dangers of Insurrection, which have been so [illegible word] and destructive, and which are daily more to be apprehended since the establishment of the Black Empire of Hayti in St. Domingo . . . (Minutes, 17 October 1806, *ibid.*)

Four decades later, when the Colonial Office embarked on a more serious programme of Chinese immigration, it was still imagined that the Chinese would fulfill this role: ". . . it is hoped they will form a middle class better capable of standing the climate than the natives of Madeira, more energetic than the East Indians and less fierce and barbarous than emigrants from the Kroo coast of Africa" (Barkly to Grey, 26 August 1851, PP vol. LXVIII).

To preserve White control, colonial society required a docile, distinct, and disinterested people to create a buffer zone between the Black and White elements in society. Representations of the Chinese migrants were made to fit the specifications of this need. For example, in response to inquiries made by the Colonial Office of its possessions in the East to which the Chinese had migrated earlier came reports that depicted the Chinese as being tractable, orderly, and not easily discontented. They were described as being "cheerful, peaceable and well-disposed", and demonstrating

“docility and obedience”, as well as “regular order, obedience and industry, together with a perfect degree of reconciliation, confidence and happiness”<sup>141</sup>. They were, such descriptions declared, a people content with their lot as labourers who would be disinclined to behave in revolutionary manner – “too sensible to be led away into riots” – thereby, providing a stabilising element to West Indian society<sup>142</sup>.

One of the most important means of affirming the buffer zone position of the Chinese communities was to depict the migrants as having different interests from the Black labouring classes. Thus, despite the fact that they were performing substantially the same work and living under similar conditions, they were consistently depicted as being free from the hostile and uncooperative attitudes of some of the Blacks, as well as Indians, and of being largely supportive of colonial authority in confrontations between labour and estate management. In this regard, colonial texts often take particular care to report on the behaviour of the Chinese during incidents of labour unrest on the plantations, focussing on their non-participation or on their willingness to be used to diffuse such situations. For example, the 1871 Commissioners in Guyana, noted that “The Chinese, as far as we are aware, have never combined with the Indians in disturbances on the estates; but, on the other hand, have occasionally taken the side of the employer in opposing them” (Report of the Commissioners, PP vol. XX).

A more revealing depiction of the role expected of the Chinese is demonstrated in a report detailing the attack on an estate manager by Black labourers during a wage dispute. The Indian immigrants on the estate were reluctant to respond to appeals to assist the manager. At that point, the Chinese gang was sent for. With their aid, the Blacks were subdued. In fact, so “thorough” were the Chinese in their

---

<sup>141</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 16 July 1853; Hislop to Windham, 26 October 1806, PRO CO



assistance, that a Black man was killed during the fracas<sup>143</sup>. This would not be the only time that the Chinese would be called upon to actively help maintain nineteenth century colonial order. A similar incident occurred when conflict arose between Indian labourers and management on another estate. In this situation, the Chinese with the assistance of the Blacks, were able to help contain the Indians<sup>144</sup>. The importance of these reports lies in their depiction of the Chinese as active participants in maintaining colonial order; indeed, as in having no real allegiance to anything other than the colonial order itself. To maintain such an idea, colonial discourse produced an image of the Chinese as a distinct and somewhat solitary component of West Indian society.

This idea of Chinese distinctiveness also appears in *Lutchmee and Dilloo* in that Jenkins does not allow the Chinese and the Indian communities to form a truly united community as indentured labourers. Jenkins' inclusion of the Chinese populations into what might be called a general "coolie strata" was very limited. Indeed, there are only two incidents in the novel in which the Chinese are explicitly included in this category. The first occurs in the violent interaction between estate management and the workers when an attempt is made to arrest Chin-a-foo after Achattu's death. The second is the brief suggestion that the Chinese are involved in the *Tadja* festival. Jenkins describes *Tadja* as a "hybrid and foreign imitation" of the Moslem festival in which "all coolies join in celebrating, it is a sort of holiday, or rather of a carnival" (Jenkins, *Lutchmee*, vol. III, p. 68). The Chinese seem to be somewhat involved, they are present when Dilloo kills Hanouman, for example, and

---

295/14.

<sup>142</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 10 November 1870.

<sup>143</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 28 December 1875.

<sup>144</sup> Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 1 November 1870.

as such, appear to be included in Jenkins definition of “all coolies”<sup>145</sup>. A connection between the Chinese and the Indian coolies is more explicit in the *mêlée* that occurs when estate management attempts to arrest Chin-a-foo. In this situation the Indian and Chinese communities fight side-by-side against White management. Importantly, however, this solidarity is limited to a very basic level, namely, a line between coolie and management. This is a division that is clearly drawn when Craig is stabbed and the cry goes up: “Take him from *them*” (Jenkins, *Lutchmee*, vol. 1, p. 22, emphasis added). There is a split between “us” – coolie – and “them” – management. Other than these brief incidents, however, the Chinese community remains isolated from the Indians<sup>146</sup>.

Exoticism and mystery were qualities often associated with the manner in which the Chinese in the West were represented throughout the nineteenth century and such images were also used to emphasize Chinese distinctiveness. In ‘Wan Lee the Pagan’, all the Chinese characters are associated with that which is fascinatingly foreign and mysterious. Hop Sing’s warehouse is a site of strange alien objects and a fabulous magician’s performance, the high point being the “birth” of Wan Lee. Wan Lee literally appears out of thin air and indeed, no explanation is ever given for his dramatic “birth”. It is simply just accepted as part of the mystery of the Chinese. Exoticism was also marked in more everyday fashion by setting off Chinese customs,

---

<sup>145</sup>Bronkhurst claimed that the Chinese were participating in *Tadja* in Guyana by being employed “to build the gaudy temples, and indeed they give the Coolies far better temples than they themselves can make” (Bronkhurst, p. 357). Interestingly, Black participants were neither accepted nor desired by the immigrants from India. In fact, when Black creoles attempted to hold a “black *Tadja*”, the Chinese and Indian destroyed the procession and temples (see editorials *Royal Gazette*, 11 March 1873 and 10 May 1873). Four years later, Bronkhurst was still complaining of Black creoles creating their own *Tadja* festival, noting that “respectable” persons of the community, along with individuals of the Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, Africans and Barbadians communities did not support the festival (Bronkhurst, pp. 363 – 364).

<sup>146</sup>Jenkins includes woodcuttings by a Chinese migrant in *The Coolie* (see Appendix B, p. v), detailing a scene of indentured labourers. Interestingly, although the artist places the Indians and Chinese in similar positions in terms of their relationship to the indenture system, they remain in clearly separated groups.

styles and behaviour against those of the West. Chinese medicine, for example, becomes a site of curiosity in 'See Yup' when White miners secretly try some Chinese medicine seeking relief from their dysentery symptoms. Although the medicine seems to work, they ultimately reject it because a White doctor, playing on stereotypes of the Chinese, advises them that "Chinese medicines are not simple or natural" but "are positively noxious . . . "(Harte, 'See Yup', p. 154). What Chinese medicine consists of, that is, what the doctor thinks they are, is never actually revealed to the reader, Harte obviously assuming that the reader will be able to imagine suitably exotic ingredients to associate with a Chinese product.

In the West Indies, similar concerns about Chinese medicine were raised that suggest a belief in a wide, unbridgeable distance, enshrouded by mystery between China and the West. In his description of Guyana's labouring population, for example, Bronkhurst includes an article from an Australian newspaper detailing an inquest on the patient of a Chinese doctor. The article suggests that Chinese medical knowledge is not scientific and therefore, really not knowledge at all; rather, it is deemed merely ritualistic and superstitious practices of an unknowable culture. Bronkhurst insists that Chinese medical practitioners in Australia are "The same kind of Chinese doctors we have in British Guyana" and argues that they should not be allowed to practice "even on their own countrymen" (Bronkhurst, pp. 304 and 306). By such depictions, Chinese medicine is made part of the "exoticisation" of the Chinese presence in the West Indies.

A more common means of identifying the Chinese as strangely distinct was to assert that they had a bizarre diet. Harte's fiction, for example, makes repeated suggestions that the Chinese eat pickled mice. Stephens' poem, 'My Other Chinee Cook', is based on the stereotype that Chinese eat dogs – a common enough image in



the West Indies at this time apparently, as Kirke feels at ease asking his Chinese host if he and his family eat dog meat. This fascination with what the Chinese were eating is even deemed newsworthy, with nineteenth century West Indian newspaper articles reporting that Chinese ate frogs or claiming that some Chinese would eat any animal substance, such as dogs, cats and rats, in any state.

Clothing and other lifestyle indicators were also pointed to as evidence of the vast difference between the Chinese and the West. Interestingly, Governor Barkly's claim that the Chinese were quickly buying items of Western apparel in Guyana is undermined by other reports that insisted that the Chinese were retaining their traditional style of clothing. White claimed, for example, that the Chinese did not easily give up their native dress or cultural traits while Bronkhurst insisted that "The ubiquitous Chinese never depart in the least from their national dress" (Bronkhurst, p. 209), an idea that seems supported by illustrations of Chinese in texts from the period (see Appendices C and D, pp. vii and viii). Bronkhurst also points to other ways in which the Chinese were distinct from other members of West Indian society, claiming, for example, that the Chinese "can never do without their chopsticks" and commenting on the practice of some Chinese women of cosmetically whitening their faces (*ibid.*, p. 253). In the same manner, the constant description of the Chinese as opium-users throughout nineteenth century texts heightened the sense of exotic difference about them. As with these other details, it provided highly visible and effective means of designating the Chinese as an alien presence in the community.

Bronkhurst also repeatedly portrays Chinese language as strange and incomprehensible. For him, it is a "monosyllabic language, which no foreigner can understand, or easily learn or acquire"; "full of curses, oaths and imprecations; and "so difficult and complicated that it would take a man's whole natural lifetime to

study it, and even then he could not be a complete master of it" (Bronkhurst, pp. 114, 243 and 223). Other writers in this period were equally disparaging. In California, for example, Chinese languages were described as "gabbling and chattering", a "horrid jargon", and a "noise like that of a flock of geese" while in Australia, descriptions included "a babble of grotesque gibberish", and simply "weird" (Paul, p. 184; Dyson, 'Golden Shanty', p. 252). The use of language to designate the absolute "Otherness" of the Chinese in the West is also evident in the fact that although Wan Lee and Li Tee, who, if not actually born in California, have apparently lived there for the majority of their young lives, cannot speak English without an accent; Charles Leland wrote an entire collection of poems in Chinese "pidgin English"; and Jenkins mocks the attempts of the Chinese to say the various international names of plantations in Guyana, like La Pénitence, Bathsheba's Lust or De Kinderen.

The strangeness of the Chinese language also played another important role in the ongoing strategy of representing the Chinese as an unknowable "Other" throughout the nineteenth century; it designated them as inaccessible. In 'A Golden Shanty', for example, when Doyle confronts the Chinese miners about their thefts, they retreat into their own language, "bandied jests at his expense in their native tongue, and laughed the little man to scorn" (Dyson, 'Golden Shanty', p. 253). A more common technique of indicating mysteriousness or the essential "unknowability" of the Chinese was in the depiction of their blankness of expression.

Perhaps the most regularly-used description of the Chinese in nineteenth century texts are the words "bland" or "sad". Indeed, "sad" often seems to be synonym for "bland" in that it suggests a certain monotony of expression that was really no expression at all. On his trip through the West Indies, for example, Kingsley describes the Chinese expression as "doleful" and "unfathomable", and wondered,

“why do the Chinese never smile?” (Kingsley, pp. 72 and 306) In fact, he reports that only once during his trip did he ever see a Chinese laugh, an incident deemed so astonishing that he compares his shock to that if his horse had suddenly begun to speak. From California, Harte provided this more detailed, but strikingly similar contemporary description:

The expression of the Chinese face in the aggregate is neither cheerful nor happy . . . There is an abiding consciousness of degradation – a secret pain or self-humiliation visible in the line of the mouth and eye. Whether it is only a modification of the Turkish gravity, or whether it is the dread Valley of the Shadow of the Drug through which they are continually straying, I cannot say. They seldom smile, and their laughter is of such an extraordinary and sardonic nature – so purely a mechanical spasm, quite independent of any mirthful attribute – that to this day I am doubtful whether I ever saw a Chinaman laugh.<sup>147</sup>

Like language, the supposed “monotonous facial expression” contributed to the mystery of the Chinese in that it rendered them unreadable. As such, it is a quality consistently depicted as assisting the Chinese to succeed at their schemes, whether it be Ah Sin’s bland smile or See Yup’s impassivity in California; “the bland heathen” in Australia; or the “strange unimpressive faces” of the Chinese in Chin-a-foo’s gambling establishment (Harte, ‘See Yup’, p. 149; Dyson, ‘Golden Shanty’, p. 253; Jenkins, *Lutchmee*, vol. I, p. 20). Additionally, their reputed blankness was represented as making the Chinese indistinguishable from each other to the Western eye. It is this quality that See Yup and his fellow miners rely on in the scam that they concoct to avoid paying the Foreign Miners Tax. It is also used by one of the Chinese thieves in ‘A Golden Shanty’ when, although caught by Doyle in the process of stealing bricks, he boldly claims it was not him but the “odder fellow”, implying that Doyle cannot tell the difference between any of the Chinese men (Dyson, ‘Golden

---

<sup>147</sup> Bret Harte, ‘John Chinaman’, *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XIV, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 220 – 223, p. 220.



Shanty', p. 255). In Guyana, the same belief in this essential "unknowability" of the Chinese is evident in the reluctance of the police to attempt to enter the Chinese settlement of Hopetown in the search of criminals or estate deserters. This hesitance is due partly to the fear of violence by the Chinese but also to their inability to distinguish one Chinese face from another while attempting to put a warrant into effect.

Another, more literary, means of defining the Chinese as outsiders was to use them as distanced points from which to critique Western society. This is an oft-used strategy in Harte's work, with See Yup, Li Tee and Wan Lee, even Ah Sin, to a lesser extent, all becoming sites from which Harte can criticise the hypocrisy and violence of so-called Christian Californian society. In his poem, 'The Latest Chinese Outrage', for example, Harte challenges the idea of White manifest destiny and superiority (a topic also considered in 'Three Vagabonds of Trinidad'), by providing an encounter between Chinese laundrymen and White miners in which the White miners come out the worse for wear. Similarly, in Ambrose Bierce's 'Peaceful Expulsion', it is the significantly named Tok Bak who is able to identify the unholy alliance of political ambition and economic insecurity in the racist attitudes demonstrated towards the Chinese. 'The Ballad of Wing-King-Wo' provides a less political approach in its criticism of fashionable English society's pursuit of exotica, while Frederick Ward's 'Chinee' mounts a critique of the immodesty of Western women's fashions – "their 'full-dress' *undress*" – in a Chinese man's perturbation at their sight<sup>148</sup>. Kingsley uses a similar device to express his concern about the amount of rum and general frivolity that he observes when attending the races in Trinidad. He is particularly disapproving

---

<sup>148</sup> Charles Leland, 'The Ballad of Wing-King-Wo', *Pidgin English Sing-Song* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002); Ambrose Bierce, 'Peaceful Expulsion', *The Collected Works* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002); Frederick

of the merry-go-round because when women ride it, it reveals too much of their bodies, in his opinion. As he ponders the scene before him, Kingsley sees another gentleman, also standing distanced from the noisy crowd, “seemingly absorbed in the very same reflection”, whom, upon closer examination, turns out to be Chinese (Kingsley, p. 305). The scene re-emphasises and utilises the alien status of the Chinese in this scene by making distance the necessary conditioning for critiquing the scene, and in allowing Kingsley to project his feelings of alienation unto the Chinese individual. Here, as with so many nineteenth century images of the Chinese, distance or non-belonging in West Indian space is represented as the definitive quality of “being Chinese” within the West Indies.

## Conclusion

Nineteenth century representations of Chinese migrants to West Indian colonies were contained within a discourse that expressed the interests of the colonial power. In other words, such representations were part of a discursive “configuration of White power”<sup>149</sup>. Depictions of the Chinese served two major roles within this discourse: to help create and to maintain the privileges and powers of the estate-owning classes within the West Indies. Chinese images defined the boundaries of White identity by being portrayed in contrast as its “Other”. White identity was refined and clarified through a series of “nots”: it was not without political power; it was not without moral authority and responsibility; it did not consist of a certain set of cultural behaviours and tastes. These “nots” were represented as the defining qualities of Chinese identity. Thus, through difference, the Chinese community provided a

---

Ward, ‘Chinee’, *Woman Must Weep* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002).

reflection of what it meant to be White within the West Indies. They also helped create an image of a society that was stratified into discrete groups, each with its own particular role and access to power. More importantly, images of the Chinese also maintained this order by providing justification for its establishment and continuing existence.

Said argues that orientalism is a strategy that depended on “flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (Said, p. 90). Similarly, in the West Indies, representations of the Chinese were part of a series of images that continually asserted the “flexible positional superiority” of the White elements within the colonial order. These images justified White domination in the West Indies by asserting their relative superiority to all other groups within the society, particularly on a moral scale, and by justifying a hierarchical distribution of power within the colonies on these grounds.

These strategies for imagining the Chinese had significant long-term implications for nationhood in terms of a community of belonging. First, they helped to reinforce the concept that the populations in the West Indies consisted of clearly defined groups, who were bound together in relationships of unequal access to power. In this sense, all the groups that made up West Indian populations were “outsiders” to each other, that is, clearly identified individual communities. The Chinese were outsiders to the Black communities in the same way that they were outsiders to the White communities or that the Black communities were outsiders to the Whites or the Indians. In addition to this generic outsider status, the Chinese were identified as being particularly alien and exotic to the West Indies. They were mysterious, not only

---

<sup>149</sup> In ‘Orientalism’, Said argues that cultures or histories cannot seriously be understood



because they were comparative newcomers, but because the cultural markers used to identify them were perceived to be highly incongruous with other established groups in West Indian society. Their representations “proved” that there was no real cultural commonality between the Chinese and other members of the West Indian population and established an image of the Chinese as permanent outsiders to West Indian space.

Although there were significant links between the Chinese and the members of Black or Indian labouring classes during the nineteenth century, such connections and incidents of breakdown in boundaries between these groups were ignored or downplayed within colonial discourse. Instead, the Chinese were consistently represented as sharing in the political and financial interests of that group which dominated the colonial order. Thus, despite being positioned as outsiders to West Indian space in general, the Chinese were, at the same time, represented as being insiders to the West Indian colonial order, having been granted a specific role to play in the maintenance of that order. Indeed, the Chinese communities became important nineteenth century symbols of colonial order and the values, inconsistencies and beliefs encompassed therein. For example, when Kingsley visited a new settlement in central Trinidad, an area that had been recently peopled only by Aborigines, he was pleased to see the evidence of nascent colonial civilisation. For him, this was indicated by the existence of a church and “Two Chinese shops . . . [with] Celestials with pig-tails and thick soled shoes grinning behind cedar counters, among stores of Bryant’s safety matches, Huntley and Palmer’s biscuits, and Allsopp’s pale ale” (Kingsley, pp. 205 – 206).

Nineteenth century images of the Chinese are also notable because of the lack of response by the Chinese to their depiction. Indeed, the only real voice of the

---

without studying the “configurations of power” behind them (p. 89).

Chinese in the West Indies appears visually in two woodcuttings included in *The Coolie* (see Appendix B, p. v); and even in this case, they are “translated” by Jenkins’ explanations of the illustrations. The woodcuttings displaying the abuse and mistreatment suffered by Chinese labourers stand in dramatic contrast to those colonial representations of the Chinese that portray them as supporting the colonial order. Nevertheless, the overriding image of the Chinese in the West Indies remained that which was constructed by colonial discourse, which in its authoritative depiction of the Chinese includes implicitly, an image of their silence.

By the twentieth century, the image of the Chinese community was well-established as that of the paradoxical insider and outsider in West Indian space. Both such positions were intrinsically bound up within a discourse that was essentially an expression of White power and privilege in the colonies. Negative and positive associations with the Chinese were flexible, determined by the needs of the discourse and by the positions in which other groups of society were placed in relation to the Chinese and to each other within the terms of the discourse. The inconsistencies in the images of the Chinese, such as being portrayed as open to Christianity and of being absolutely pagan or of accommodating to European norms and retaining Chinese fashions, reveal that the shifts made to representations of the Chinese were a result of continual negotiation of White power and privilege and therefore, of the particular needs of the discourse in which they were constructed. Also important to long-term representations of the Chinese was the practice of using the Chinese community as an imaginative tool to define and clarify positions of belonging within the West Indies. It was a technique that, as the next chapter demonstrates, was also employed in twentieth century fictional representations of the Chinese.

## Chapter Four

### **“Living Out Fantasies”: Fictional Representations of the Chinese in the Twentieth Century**

“Lowe said it again, in a thin, clenched whisper: ‘Why you couldn’t so much as ask me what I want? Eh, why?’ Nobody had ever asked him. He had just lived out all their fantasies.”  
Patricia Powell<sup>150</sup>

#### **Introduction**

Foucault’s argument regarding the relationship between power and knowledge in discourse has been summarised as a response to an urgent need at a given historical moment (Bhabha, ‘Other Question’, pp. 73 – 74). For Foucault, knowledge is created to ensure the retention or the achievement of power at particular historical moments. His concept has particular implications for the disruptions and continuation of images of the Chinese in the West Indies from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The “urgent need” of colonial discourse at the period in which the Chinese entered the West Indian colonies was to retain White economic, political and social domination during the unsettled post-emancipation period. In the twentieth century, however, with the rise of nationalist movements in particular, the representations of the Chinese became enmeshed within a more articulate and self-conscious resistance to the colonial order.

West Indian resistance discourses seek to question the grounds on which colonial authority is based, and to create or reconstruct images of the colonised. In



this sense, we are speaking about the nebulous area of post-colonial discourse. Part of the confusion around post-colonial theory lies in the breadth of disciplines in which it has been used, its overlap with other discourses (e.g., postmodernism), and the different subject positions from which it is articulated (e.g., settler and non-settler colonies). The term itself is somewhat misleading with regard to the subject matter of this chapter for it suggests the specific historical moment of political independence or only those strategies employed to set up an independent political state. In terms of the texts to be examined in this chapter, however, I am concerned with long-term strategies used to imagine, express and validate the experiences and perspectives of West Indian communities during and after colonisation. These are, in other words, texts that are part of a continuing strategy to resist the imagined order of the colonial discourse by setting up alternative images.

It is important to emphasise, however, that what I am calling “resistance discourse” is indeed a discourse. As such, it expresses a will to power, both imaginatively and politically, in which “knowledge” is constructed through representational strategies to express and support this will to power. The representations of the Chinese in the twentieth century built on the “knowledge” of the nineteenth century but were adjusted to meet the specific needs of resistance discourse. In particular, Chinese stereotypes were employed to dramatise the separation between those accorded valid membership in the new nation and those outside these boundaries. In this role, they were often portrayed as representatives of the oppression and exploitation that the resistance discourse sought to counter, or they were identified as having alien interests and experiences to that of the national community. As such, they were identified as ultimate outsiders to West Indian spaces.

---

<sup>150</sup> Patricia Powell, *The Pagoda* (San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt

The paradox is, however, that at the same time, representations of the Chinese were used to define another separation – the boundaries between West Indian and colonial space. By representing the Chinese as integral members of West Indian colonies and experience, Chinese communities became an important means of establishing the outer limits of a separate cultural space of action, norms and values in the West Indies distinct from the colonial metropole. In this context, the Chinese were portrayed as insiders to the new nations, and as significant contributors to, and representatives of West Indian identity.

## **The Boundary Within**

Unsurprisingly, images of virility and manhood are central to the self-image that resistance discourse constructs for they stand in direct contrast to colonial discourses' common presentations of the colonised "Other" as childish or brutish. These images had been the basis of the coloniser's claim to a right and a responsibility to dominate the colonised. The alternative images constructed in resistance discourse assert the colonised's independence and ability to manage his own affairs within the image of capable manhood, where manhood is often indicated by economic success and sexual prowess. However, the image of effective, independent manhood is often undermined by the difficulties faced by West Indian post-colonial milieus in dismantling those economic structures that ensured limited access to economic power and privilege. In the face of this reality, a common stereotype of the Chinese to emerge in the twentieth century was that of a threat to the very sense of independent self-hood that resistance discourse in the West Indies struggled to maintain.

---

Brace & Company, 1998), p. 99. Further references to this novel will be given after quotation in the

In the masculine world of *Miguel Street*, manhood is closely identified with both economic and sexual successes<sup>151</sup>. Indeed, since economic success is missing in their lives, sexual virility becomes the more common signifier of manhood. Thus, tiny Mr. Morgan points to the fact that he has fathered ten children as reason for acceptance into the street's clique, while Hat notes that Bogart is only able to "be a man, among we men" once he has children, even though he has to commit bigamy to do so (Naipaul, *Miguel*, p. 14). Eddoes' situation is slightly different in that his manhood has some associations with relative economic success and the accumulation of status symbols, both of which are connected to his work as a garbage man. This situation, combined with the powerful effects that an unnamed Chinese man has on his life, demonstrate that his manhood is, like the garbage he collects, actually a "cast-off" of those who had – and still retain – power under the colonial regime.

The fragility of Eddoes' claim to manhood is demonstrated in how easily it is threatened. This occurs when a woman claims that he is the father of her unborn child when true paternity belongs to a Chinese man. As the child's father, the Chinese man endangers all the symbols of Eddoes' manhood. On the most obvious level, Eddoes' has failed sexually in that he has not actually produced a child. More tangentially, yet equally important, is that by impregnating the woman, this man has also put Eddoes' job at risk – for the woman claims that she will have Eddoes fired if he does not take responsibility for raising the baby. In the end, although the community on the street symbolically gives Eddoes back his manhood by accepting the baby as his, the impact of the Chinese man on Eddoes' life has revealed an emptiness to Eddoes' manhood.

---

text.

<sup>151</sup> V.S. Naipaul, *Miguel Street* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1959). Further references to this novel will be given after quotation in the text.



The reader, and the community on the street, have been made aware that Eddoes cannot really claim either the job, the junk, or the daughter as his own<sup>152</sup>.

The theme of the Chinese as a threat to "native" West Indians' economic self-sufficiency and advancement is also evident in the experience of Donovan in 'Platform Shoes'<sup>153</sup>. Donovan's hopes to raise himself economically are symbolised in his desire for literal elevation – the platform shoes. His boss, Mr. Chin, directly prevents him from achieving his goals by beating him at the cardgame, ensuring that Donovan does not have the money to buy the shoes; shooting Donovan, leaving him permanently lame; and eventually firing him. Chin's presence in 'Platform Shoes' is not presented as simply a threat to one individual. Instead, the interaction between Donovan and Chin is clearly represented as a conflict that is taking place on the national level. In fact, the story begins with the image of Chinese invaders who have conquered the community financially when Donovan notes that the majority of the businesses on the street, or the shops in which they are housed, are owned by Chinese.

The complementary image to that of the financial and sexual emasculation of the West Indian man by the Chinese is that of Chinese sexual exploitation of Black West Indian women. Chinese males are consistently represented as sexual predators, taking advantage of the dire financial circumstances of Black creole women<sup>154</sup>. This is

---

<sup>152</sup> Alecia McKenzie's short story 'Jakes Makes', *Satellite City and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992), pp. 54 – 78, uses a similar incident to depict Jamaica as a sterile environment, unconducive to the productivity of Black men. In this story, Jakes' girlfriend becomes pregnant by her boss, Mr. Chang, although she initially claims that patrimony belongs to Jakes. Further references to 'Jakes Makes' will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>153</sup> Earl McKenzie, 'Platform Shoes', *Two Roads to Mount Joyful and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Ltd., 1992), pp. 46 – 57.

<sup>154</sup> In *A Brighter Sun* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1985), Samuel Selvon provides one of the few images of sexual impotency in Chinese men in terms of exploiting Black West Indian women when he reduces Tall Boy's interactions with them to a joke. Nevertheless, Tall Boy is still in a position of power over these women, being permitted behaviour which would not be tolerated by any other man. The reason for such freedom is suggested in the closing lines of the paragraph when Tall Boy suddenly does not have any produce available for the woman who complains about his behaviour:

Tall Boy made fun with all the girls and young women in the village, even when Mary was present. She never paid attention to him laughing and leaning over the counter to touch their bodies. He told them, smiling, that he was going to sleep with them that

certainly the situation in 'Her Chinaman's Way'<sup>155</sup>. Maria becomes involved with Wing specifically because she has not had the financial support of a man for six months and is becoming desperate. It is also suggested in the relationship between Grace and Mr. Chang in 'Jakes Makes'. After all, when Grace first moves into the neighbourhood, she rejects the attention of the many "near-dead" men who make advances towards her (McKenzie, 'Jakes Makes', p. 66). The fact that she ends up having a child with her boss, old Mr. Chang, raises the obvious question as to whether or not Grace entered into a sexual relationship with Chang for financial reasons. In *The Hills of Hebron*, the relationship between Chin-Quee the grocer and his common-law wife, Martha, is also represented as an abnormal male-female relationship in that it is described as a type of slavery<sup>156</sup>. It is in this context that Martha's attitude in the shop is said to be "mutinous". Even more obvious is the depiction of their sexual life

---

night, and they said, 'But Tall Boy too fresh, *oui!* Yuh too fast wid yuhself!' When Mary was in the parlour he held their hands or commented on their figures, in the bar he said to the men, "That is ah good one to sleep wid!" and the men laughed because *they knew he was harmless*. If the girls got angry he asked them if they couldn't take a joke. "Dou-dou, yuh know is only a joke Ah making. Come, wat it is yuh want, butter? No butter dis week. No saltfish either." (p. 59, emphasis added)

Interestingly, there are very few images of Chinese women as sexual beings in twentieth century texts, probably due to the fact that there are not, in general, many depictions of Chinese women at all. The few depictions of women are usually limited to working in the shop and raising children such as Wing's wife Noel in Woodroffe's 'Wing's Way', *Best West Indian Stories*, ed. by Kenneth Ramchand, Nelson Caribbean reprint (Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1984), pp. 138 – 144 or Mary in Samuel Selvon's *A Brighter Sun*. Indeed, Selvon sums up the general stereotype of the Chinese woman in the West Indies when he writes "Mary was doomed to be always with child when she married Tall Boy, but she was Chinese and accepted it" (p. 52).

A notable exception to this rule is the scene in Roger Mais' *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, (Kingston and Port of Spain: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., Caribbean Writers Series, 1981) when Manny is recounting his sexual exploits to Wilfie. Importantly, in their discussion of the apparently sexually promiscuous daughter of the Chinese grocer, known only as "Squiz-Eye", Wilfie comments: "An' the thing turned cross-ways, they say" (p. 19). Here, sexual intercourse with Squiz-Eye becomes unnatural (she becomes a type of hideous monster) and Squiz-Eye becomes the female counterpart to the Chinese image of perverted sexuality in a fashion similar to Chin-Quee (see discussion above). Further references to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>155</sup> Alfred H. Mendes, 'Her Chinaman's Way', *From Trinidad. An Anthology of Early West Indian Writing*, ed. by Reinhard W. Sander (Kent: Hodder and Stoughton Educational, 1978), pp. 103 – 118. Further reference to this short story will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>156</sup> Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (Essex: Longman Group Limited (Longman Drumbeat), 1984). Note that Chin-Quee's relationship with Martha is described as if she is some goods that he had acquired: "Chin-Quee, picked her up in the wilds of the St. Elizabeth bush and bring her



in which Chin-Quee becomes a machine rather than a man and sexual intercourse is described as a: "driving, mechanical persistence with which, night after night, her 'husband' crushed her flesh" (Wynter, p. 186).

The image of the Chinese as predators is not limited to their relationship with women alone. Instead they are routinely represented as willfully and consciously setting out to prey on the weaknesses and vulnerability of other West Indians, becoming the personification of exploitation against which the "real West Indian" must struggle. This deep-rooted image appears again and again in West Indian fiction<sup>157</sup>. In fact, in 'Cho, Delsha, Man', the word "Chinese" becomes synonymous for "exploitation" when the abusive Korean employers at a clothing factory in Jamaica are called "Chinese" by their employees<sup>158</sup>.

In conjunction with this image is that of the Chinese as economic parasites, fattening their bank accounts off the misery of other West Indians. To that end, an oft-repeated comment in West Indian fiction is that the Chinese send their money to China instead of reinvesting it within the West Indies. The words of Miss Ethelrida in

---

back here to look after the shop, and I don't have to tell you what else she had to do"(p. 184). Further references to the novel will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>157</sup> Examples of this image include Ralph de Boissière's, *Crown Jewel* (Suffolk: Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press), 1981), in which Hoo underpays his employees or Chin of 'Platform Shoes', charging 20% interest on advances he pays to employees when they lose to him at cards. The reaction of other characters to the Chinese is another technique often used to create the same effect. In Monar Rooplall's 'Money Can't Play', *Estate People* (Georgetown: Roraima Publishers, 1994), pp. 4 –15, for example, "them money-hungry Chinese shopman" (p. 10) are accused of buying up provisions at cheap prices and selling them back to the estate people at high prices. Similarly, in *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, it is believed that the Chinese grocer refused to sell Tansy matches because he thinks a strike is coming up, and at that time, he can sell them at a higher price, while in "That Woman" (Monar Rooplall, *Estate People*, op. cit., pp. 51 – 57, the Chinese boss ignores the complaints of his female employee about his customers' sexual advances, telling her that such treatment is "goo' business" (p. 53). So commonplace is the image of the exploiting Chinese that they are portrayed as even taking advantage of the members of their own community. Thus, in *Crown Jewel*, Yankee finds himself in the "the clutches of a rich Chinese merchant" (p. 114); in Robert Standish's *Mr. On Loong* (London: Peter Davies Limited, 1950 reprint), John suffers miserably at the hands of the Trinidadian Chinese; and in Edgar Mittelholzer's *A Morning in the Office* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., Caribbean Writers Series, 1974), the wealthy Grangers underpay their Chinese employees. Further references to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>158</sup> Alecia McKenzie, 'Cho, Delsha Man', *Satellite City and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992), pp. 114 – 123.



*Black Fauns* sums up this common representation of the Chinese when she reminds the women of the barrack-yard:

. . . you know how them Chinees is, how they does keep their money in de house instead of putting it in de bank; how dey does go back to China wit' all de money when they make it an don't spend a damn cent here; how they employ only Chinees like themselves in their shop, all you know dat<sup>159</sup>.

Such images of the Chinese not only identify them as outsiders to West Indian space, it reinforces the image of other West Indians as victims through a continuing narrative of oppression. Indeed, the roles of oppressor and oppressed set out in anti-colonial discourse are reinvested, with the Chinese cast in the colonial power's former role. Clearly, this is not a particular stretch of the discursive imagination since, as the last chapter has demonstrated, there was already a powerful association between the Chinese and the colonial order. Thus, in all the stories discussed so far, the non-Chinese characters express a certain degree of acceptance of the abuse enacted against them, thereby confirming their status as victims<sup>160</sup>. There is, however, an inherent danger of over simplification in such representations. The need of resistance discourse to cast an enemy on which to blame continuing financial woes and against whom to act in resistance often masks the true ambivalent position of the Chinese in the West Indies in terms of their financial (and social) power. Obviously, the Chinese shopkeeper held some control over the villagers – he set the prices, he decided whether or not to extend credit, and he chose whether or not to “marry” products to

---

<sup>159</sup> Alfred Mendes, *Black Fauns* (London, England: New Beacon Books Ltd., 1984), p. 123. Similar sentiments are expressed by numerous characters throughout West Indian fiction, including Sookdeo in Selvon's 'Highway in the Sun', *Highway in the Sun. A Collection of Plays* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1991), pp. 4 – 52. Alecia McKenzie's 'Stuck in the Maid's Room', *Satellite City and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992), pp. 9 – 23, also includes an image of the Chinese of Jamaica fleeing the communist/socialist government with suitcases filled with money. Further references to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>160</sup> In 'Jakes Makes' and *Miguel Street*, for example, both communities accept the idea that Jakes and Eddoes should take on the financial responsibility of raising children who are not their own.

each other. But such activities did not mean that there was a clean break between oppressor and oppressed marked out along financial lines. Instead, the relationship between the Chinese shopkeeper and his predominantly Black clientele involves a much more complex configuration of power.

The power exchange between the Black populations and the Chinese shopkeepers is less one-sided than the usual stereotypes imply due to the simple fact that the shopkeepers had to rely on this customer base to survive. Their economic self-sufficiency and power are therefore actually constrained by the Blacks. Such a position is vividly illustrated in 'Wing's Way' when Wing's friend and fellow shopowner loses his customers and then his shop after they become resentful of his prosperity and stop shopping there<sup>161</sup>. Wing is careful not to make the same mistake and, as a result, endures a lifestyle of deliberate poverty: "Wing lived in squalor while his bank account burst at the seams" (Woodroffe, p. 141). The relative power of the Black villagers is also shown in their refusal to use the large, new supermarket partially because it is owned by Indians, but also, as Wing recognises, because the layout disempowers them: serving themselves from the neatly shelved goods robs them of the opportunity to shout orders at the shopkeeper. The exploration of this interdependent and intricate relationship is one of the important themes of *The Pagoda*, one of the few novels in which a Chinese West Indian character is the focus of the story.

---

In fact, even in the face of the child's obvious Chinese parentage, one of Jakes' neighbours goes as far as to complain that, "No matter what kind o' pickney he have, dat bwoy shouldn't run off" (p. 70).

<sup>161</sup> In Michael Anthony's 'The Village Shop', *Cricket in the Road* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1973), pp. 115 – 120, Ma Moon Peng makes the same mistake when she insults her customers by instituting a no credit policy. She also goes bankrupt as a result. The reliance of the Chinese shopkeeper on the Black villagers is also indicated by the fact that there are actually three bankruptcies in the story – Lee Wah's father, Mr. Moon Peng and Ma Moon Peng, although from the comments of the villagers, it would seem that Lee Wah will also be driven to bankruptcy when he takes over the shop. Further reference to this story will be given after quotation in the text.

*The Pagoda* begins dramatically with the burning of Lowe's shop, an action that challenges the image of the Black masses as a powerless people. Indeed, Lowe's and the other Chinese characters' relationships to the Black villagers in this novel, reverse the position of Black victim and Chinese victimiser. As Lowe puts it, "He was there only on sufferance. Himself and the other five thousand Chinese on the island" (Powell, p. 13)<sup>162</sup>. This insecurity is vividly demonstrated when, in discussing his plans to build a Chinese centre (the pagoda) with his Black son-in-law, Lowe finds himself "pleading, asking permission to have a damn meetinghouse for his people" (ibid., p. 77). The son-in-law's hostility towards the idea of a Chinese centre is important to the depiction of Black-Chinese relations because it expresses a Black fear that the Chinese community has the ability to step into the same role as the coloniser. Thus, upon learning about Lowe's ambitions, his son-in-law makes the following comment:

At first is farming and such. Then next thing shop, and before you know, a little shop in every blasted corner you turn. Now is school and property. Soon you have my people working for you on the estates, cleaning for you in the big house. Calling you massa and such. (ibid., p. 73)

The encounter also opens up another issue in terms of Chinese power, namely, is it even possible for the Chinese to access the power attributed to them or is such power really only an illusion? In fact, the very association between the Chinese and Whites made by the son-in-law points to the limited power of the Chinese. Their power is largely just that: a power of association. It is the colonisers who protect the Chinese,

---

<sup>162</sup> Throughout the novel, Kywing provides constant warnings of the physical dangers that the Black community pose to the Chinese, and upon hearing Lowe's plan to build a pagoda, warns that the villagers would "really chop we up in this place" (p. 41), if Lowe went through with the plan. Another example of this insecurity occurs when Lowe stops at a Chinese shop on a visit to his daughter. His attempt to engage the Chinese owner by using Hakka is rebuffed because the shopkeeper clearly does not want attention drawn to his Chinese status. Indeed, the shopkeeper only relaxes and responds to Lowe when Lowe returns to speaking in English.



who accord them a higher social status, and who can also take away such symbols of power. In Lowe's world, the White colonisers remain the true dominant force.

"During his entire life on that island Lowe had been indebted to Cecil" (ibid., p. 17), the English shipowner who has transported Lowe to Jamaica, sets him up in the shop, provides him with the male disguise in which Lowe lives out his life, and even sends him a wife, Miss Sylvie, to raise their daughter and complete Lowe's masquerade as a man. It is his marriage to Miss Sylvie and the move to her newly built house, for example, that affords Lowe social prestige. His relationship with these representatives of White power also secures him a certain amount of protection, at the same time that is one of the major barriers to his acceptance into the general Black creole community. In fact, Lowe initially resists the arranged marriage because he is aware that it will create the impression that he has the same interests and power as Miss Sylvie:

. . . the people would never trust him now. Here he was Chinese, and here he was cohabiting with this white-skinned woman, Miss Sylvie, and here he was now living in the biggest house in the district with a dark-skinned maid and a dark-skinned yard boy. How to explain to the villagers when the very way he and Miss Sylvie lived up there in that house bore stark resemblance to a history and a way of life he did not live through but had heard as a story unfolding so many times at the shop he felt close to it. How to show them that he hadn't changed, wasn't changing, was still the Lowe they knew, he wasn't emulating the behavior of the ruling class even if it seemed that way, it was only that he wanted something better for Liz. (ibid., p. 108)

That Lowe's economic and social power is essentially empty is demonstrated throughout the text in little details, such as the fact that the White police officers who are sent to investigate the arson are interested only in the death of Cecil, not Lowe's loss of shop, or that Lowe has difficulty ordering the servants while, in comparison, "commands steamed effortlessly from Miss Sylvie's velvet lips . . . they came with the authority of near-alabaster porcelain skin" (ibid., p. 33). More important, however,

is how easily this so-called power can be taken away from him. When the shop is destroyed, Lowe is left entirely dependent on Miss Sylvie, a situation that reduces him to the level of a house servant when he displeases her. On a larger scale, the Chinese community's real lack of power is also evident in the numerous mentions made of restrictive legislation aimed at preventing Chinese immigration and business competition. By the novel's conclusion, Lowe realises that the Chinese and Blacks are struggling for mere scraps of privilege and power. Lowe recognises "how they all were in this together, how Cecil had thrown them all in together . . . Yet here they were like hungry dogs, setting upon each other and biting over the one little dry bone Cecil had flung them"; ". . . how they were all thrown in and piled up on top of one another and vying for power and trying to carve out niches" (ibid., pp. 102 and 198).

The relationships between Lowe and the other characters in the text (particularly his father, Cecil and Miss Sylvie) also explores another question of power; namely, the power to create identities (themselves spaces of belonging) – of representation. From birth, Lowe's identity has been molded and constrained by the desires and dreams of those around him; or, as he finally recognises, all his life, "He had just lived out all their fantasies" (ibid., p. 99). In China, his father treated Lowe as a boy because it was more appropriate to fill a boy's head with dreams of travelling adventures than a girl. When Lowe realises that his gender will limit his ability to live out his father's dreams, he decides to stowaway on a ship, ironically changing one constructed identity, that of a subservient wife and daughter, for that which his father had created for him, a male adventurer.

Lowe's encounter with Cecil on board the ship fundamentally shapes the position in which Lowe will belong upon his arrival in the West Indies. Cecil creates and imposes two identities on Lowe: Cecil's whore, bound in the ship's cabin and

subject to Cecil's sexual desires; and a Chinese shopkeeper. In the latter case, Cecil transforms Lowe into a stereotypical West Indian Chinese shopkeeper by providing him with the costume and props for his new identity. The scene on the ship where Lowe awakes to find himself outfitted as a man provides a vivid dramatisation of the newly fabricated identity that has been forced upon him by both Cecil and his father:

One day he opened his eyes and found his queue chopped off and lying flat on the floor, and Cecil was there plucking lice big as beans from his hair, the sides of which had been evenly trimmed, a deep part in the middle of his forehead. He saw too that his clothes, the padded jacket and half trousers, had been replaced with Cecil's khaki trousers, his striped shirt and white merino and woolen cardigan, his leather belt with a gleaming silver buckle, his cotton drawers and woolen socks and a sturdy pair of boots that shimmered. . . . Lowe didn't recognize himself . . . he looked again at the trousers that veered over his legs and at the cardigan that draped along his shoulders, and he swung his head, which felt light without the cord of hair, and he knew he had crossed over again, that he had come to that place of uncertainty before and here he was again. (ibid., p. 98)

The relationship between Miss Sylvie and Lowe also examines the question of power and the fabrication of identity. In particular, it demonstrates how the identity imposed on Lowe was constructed to meet the needs of the power that created it. That Lowe has always been a construct of Miss Sylvie's fantasy is evident from their first encounter when she tells Lowe, "I been dreaming bout you for years" (ibid., p. 106). Miss Sylvie's dream is never explicitly revealed; however, her personal history suggests that she has been looking for a relationship which would allow her to be a lesbian, to have and raise a child, to retain her distance from the Black masses, as well as a certain amount of space from the social constraints and expectations of her own class, and to retain her privileged position in society. All of this is available to her in Lowe – the man who is a woman, the father who is a mother, and a member of that in-



between race: "not dark-skinned, . . . not of the African peoples, not mixed race, not Indian, not low-class white . . . different altogether" (ibid., p. 92)<sup>163</sup>.

Cecil's, and to a lesser extent, Miss Sylvie's, ability to construct and impose "the fabulous masquerade that was [Lowe's] life" would never have been successful without the complicity of the villagers (ibid., p. 33). They too have a significant role to play in the imposition of the Chinese shopkeeper stereotype on Lowe. That "Chinese shopkeeper" is a specific identity with its own well-defined terms of reference is evident in the fact that the villagers often simply call Lowe by the generic "Mr. Chin", a name they apparently give to any Chinese shopkeeper. In this little detail, Powell demonstrates that Lowe's identity as an individual is largely unimportant to the villagers because it is subsumed under the greater identity of "the shopkeeper". More importantly, however, is the villagers' decision to ignore the obvious indications that Lowe's identity is false and to maintain the fantasy that has been placed before them. For example, when Lowe first spends the evening with Joyce, he awakes to find that he has been undressed. When Lowe comments that now Joyce knows his secret, Joyce responds: "I always knew" (ibid., p. 152). Similarly, when Lowe tells Omar an autobiographical story about how a man in China used to dress up a baby girl as a boy, insisting that no one could tell that she was not a boy, Omar responds meaningfully: "But you can always tell those things, Mr. Lowe" (ibid., p. 124). Despite the inconsistencies and the disruptions in the fabricated identity within which Lowe is forced to act out his life, the villagers choose not to destroy the illusion. Joyce never suggests that Lowe live life as a woman, for example, and even after Lowe has revealed his womanhood to Omar and asks Omar

---

<sup>163</sup> Interestingly, after Cecil's death, Miss Sylvie tries to recreate Lowe once again, to make him dress and look more feminine. That she ultimately fails demonstrates how important the issue of power is in creating and imposing identity. Miss Sylvie obviously is not in the same position of power

to call him by his name, Lau A-yin, Omar refuses, insisting on calling him "Mr. Lowe". By doing so, Omar forces Lowe to remain in character – as the male shopkeeper and Omar's social superior.

The desires and the needs of the various members of West Indian population converge to mould Lowe "into something both unrecognizable and foreign", a "self that no longer had inherent meaning and instead was just a compilation of fiction" (ibid., pp. 107 and 125). The pagoda, that Lowe dreams of building (and is significantly never completed) is an expression of Lowe's desire to construct his own identity. It is a place where, in the phrase he often employs to describe the pagoda, he and other Chinese can "just be", free from the expectations and fantasies of other members of the community.

*The Pagoda* is not the only piece of West Indian fiction to debate the constructed nature of Chinese identity and its relationship to belonging and power within the West Indies. Such themes are also central to *Mr On Loong*, although, unlike Powell, who creates identities within the boundaries of discursive fantasies, Standish constructs Chinese spaces of belonging and identity in terms of "blood" or race. Nevertheless, the "blood boundary" Standish creates for John On Loong is as constrained and circumscribed as Lowe's relationships in *The Pagoda*.

*Mr On Loong* depicts a world in which the behaviour and social positions of individuals in the West Indies is always a result of their "blood". Identities are composed of racial characteristics that account for and justify the social hierarchy of the fictional Newcastle Island. Julie and Laurette's reckless and passionate behaviour, for example, are blamed on their mixed-blood, that is, their African ancestry. The most dramatic evidence of this is in their free attitude towards sex. Julie bears an

---

over Lowe as Cecil had been. It should also be noted that Cecil has, to a large degree, also created Miss

illegitimate child and openly retains a number of lovers throughout the majority of her life, while her daughter, Laurette also lives outside the sexual borders of respectable Newcastle society. Indeed, it is Laurette who initiates the first sexual encounter between herself and John, an incident described in this manner:

All evening she had been tormented by the thrumming of tomtoms from a negro village which lay a few hundred yards from the hotel . . . It had called to her with an insistence which would not be denied. She had lain in bed, listening intently, groping behind the savage rhythm for the message which she knew was there if she could read it. She experienced the tantalising thoughts which perhaps torment an amnesia victim, striving to recapture elusive memories of a dim past. It may be that an ancestress had heard the same sensuous, pulsating rhythm in some remote village beside the Congo. (Standish, p. 77)

Julie's only reaction to the news of her daughter's indiscretion is used to demonstrate that she is also controlled by her "blood": "I, too heard the drums. The sounds of them were in my ears when you were conceived" (ibid., p. 80)<sup>164</sup>. It is the main character, John On Loong, however, who provides the novel with its greatest test of the constraining power of "blood".

In John, Standish creates a "young Chinese man who is not a Chinese" (ibid., p. 149). John grows up entirely removed from Chinese influences, except for a brief and disastrous period in Trinidad. The major influence in John's life is Lorillard. As a result, John "was by upbringing and training less Chinese than an Englishman or a Frenchman" (ibid., p. 133). Nevertheless, John is not freed from the limitations of Chinese identity in the West Indies. One of the earliest evidence that John's representation will be contained within clearly designated Chinese space occurs when in Anglican catechism classes, John rejects the supernatural elements of Christian beliefs as illogical. This skepticism is not presented as an individual character trait.

---

Sylvia's and Dulcina's identities.

<sup>164</sup> Similarly, "worn-out white blood" (p. 119) is used to account for the outdated prejudices and moral dissipation of White West Indians such as Mr. Hibbertson and Miss Gunson.



Rather, Standish claims it as an innately Chinese quality when he argues that the Chinese have a “tremendous awareness of realities coupled with a profound skepticism and reluctance to accept inexplicable and supernatural phenomena” (ibid., pp. 27 – 28). That John would manifest such a trait even without having been raised in a traditional Chinese environment is an assertion of the limitations of “blood” that Standish establishes throughout the text.

In a similar fashion, John’s portrayal corresponds with the stereotype of the bland, emotionless Chinese. Although as a youngster in Lorillard’s care, John is said to be lacking “oriental inscrutability” having instead, a “completely open face, which registered his emotions – pleasure, fear, rage, tenderness – in almost bucolic fashion”, he reverts to “type” in his adulthood (ibid., p. 134). As his friend notes, “It was like watching a neglected rose-bush reverting to the wild Rambler, impelled by the law which seems to force every living creature or plant, in the absence of some strong counter-influence, to revert to its parent type” (ibid., pp. 185 – 186). John’s restrained and imperturbable reaction to the loss of Laurette or the death of his son is depicted as neither a personal quirk nor a learned cultural practice. Instead, it is presented as “one of their [the Chinese] chief characteristics”, that is, one of the fundamental qualities of Chinese identity (ibid., p. 185). Because the novel insists that it is “Chinese” to be emotionally restrained, John cannot be depicted as having any other response to such situations.

The limited space available to John is not simply imposed by the author in his construction of a Chinese character. It is also imposed upon John by other characters within the text, most obviously, Lorillard. For example, although John considers himself most comfortable working the land and has proven himself an apt and able sailor, neither career receives serious consideration from Lorillard. Instead, Lorillard

decides: “For you, my small Chinese man, is the market place” (ibid., p. 42). It is a career choice that is less about employment opportunities than it is about fulfilling the terms of Chinese identity within the West Indies. In this regard, John is consistently depicted as having an innate business acumen: “As a mere child he had shown a *natural* gift for trading”; “John had shown an immediate aptitude for business and an *instinctive* grasp of the essentials”; and “[John was] a *born* merchant” (ibid., pp. 82, 71 and 158, emphasis added). Such descriptions, along with the absolute definitiveness of Lorillard’s statement, set specific boundaries for the identity accorded to John within his West Indian environment. Just as he is precluded from emotional responses because of his Chinese identity, John can only follow one career. The market place is the one and only space designated for him within the West Indies.

The limited positions allowed the Chinese, particularly in terms of their economic roles within the West Indies, is also developed in V.S. Naipaul’s ‘The Baker’s Story’<sup>165</sup>. Naipaul’s story is based on a reversal of the inclusive interpretation of the claim in Trinidad’s national anthem that there is place for every creed and race in Trinidad. Naipaul’s story reveals a society in which people are trapped into positions specifically by creed and race: “though Trinidad have every race and every colour, every race have to do special things” (ibid., p. 173). Thus, it is that to be successful, a Black baker must provide a “Chinese face” for his business, for in the Trinidad of the story, the baked goods sector of the economy has been designated as Chinese space. The bakery essentially becomes a stage in which Chinese identity can be acted out surrounded by the appropriate props – a sign with Chinese lettering,

---

<sup>165</sup> V.S. Naipaul, ‘The Baker’s Story’, *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, ed. by E.A. Markham (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1996), pp. 165 – 175. Further references to this short story will be given after quotation in the text.

Chinese newspapers, and a Chinese-looking employee (complete with fake Chinese accent), behind the counter<sup>166</sup>.

In a process paralleling the relationship between Cecil and Lowe, the unnamed narrator creates a Chinese character in a very literal manner in the person of his employee, Macnab. The few details about Macnab that appear in the text suggests that, although he has Chinese ancestry, he is more involved with the creole Trinidadian community than with the Chinese community. He is, after all, discovered in a barrack-yard practicing steelpan for Carnival and his name is certainly not particularly Chinese. But because "he could pass for one of those Cantonese", Macnab is not permitted to remain in the creole-space of calypso, steelpan and carnival (*ibid.*, p. 174). Instead he is forced into the role that his Chinese identity affords him: serving behind a shop counter. Like Lowe, whatever Macnab's own personal preferences might be, they become subsumed under a larger stereotype<sup>167</sup>.

The limited identities permitted to Chinese characters such as Lowe, John and Macnab create (and require) distinct boundaries between the Chinese and other members of their respective West Indian societies. Such portrayals help to construct the image of the Chinese as a particularly discrete and self-contained community

---

<sup>166</sup> Interestingly, images of the Chinese having accented speech is not consistent throughout West Indian fiction. This may be partially because so few of the Chinese characters actually speak. But, it also shows the ambivalent positioning of the Chinese in West Indian space. On the one hand, their inability to master the language is a constant means of marking them as outsider; on the other hand, the equally common image of the Chinese speaking the same creolised English as the rest of their communities establishes them as members of that community. The fact that both images exist is part of the continuing ambiguous positioning of the Chinese in their relationship to other West Indians.

<sup>167</sup> It is not only Macnab who is constrained within rigid spaces of belonging in the story. After years of working for Chinese bakers, the Black narrator describes himself as having a certain "Chinee-ness" (p. 169): he dresses in khaki and merino, drinks Chinese tea, speaks some Chinese and shares their work ethic. Nonetheless, the narrator is never truly accepted within the boundaries of Chinese space represented by his employer and his family. Thus, when they lose the bakery and the family is in the process of moving on, they show no concern for him as a member of their group, seemingly considering him to be "just part of the shop" (p. 69). He is not one of "them". Similarly, the only other character in the story to try to step out of the confines of racially prescribed occupations is the Black coconut seller. Coconut selling in Trinidad is apparently reserved for Indians, so, although the Black man chops coconuts like the other Indians and even speaks Hindustani, he is not actually accepted by them. Instead, they are described as "giving him jokes like hell" (p. 172).



distanced from the greater creole space. As in the nineteenth century, other literary means of establishing the outsider status of the Chinese include depicting them as mysterious or exotic. In 'The Beauty Contest', for example, the contestant from Ma Fong Restaurant is unique because the Chinese elements in all her costumes, make her stand out from the other competitors<sup>168</sup>. In 'The Magic Ring' and 'British Guiana', the presence of the Chinese indicates that which is inexplicable and mysterious, such as the raised Chinese characters on the ring, or Sybil and Ling's almost supernatural ability to foresee Motley's imminent death<sup>169</sup>. Chinese identity as distinct from a more generic West Indian identity is also marked by images of the Chinese as outsiders to the moral norms of other West Indians such as in the description of Hong Wing in Mendes' 'Her Chinaman's Way'.

The suggestion that Hong Wing is depraved, deviant and somewhat diabolical is established early in the text. After all, it is only when Maria submits to an Obeah ritual in a desperate attempt to find a man to financially support her that Wing enters her life. Throughout their relationship, Maria is constantly afraid of Wing, aware of a dangerous undercurrent that pulses through his being. Maria's fear of Wing is an important indication that she is in the presence of something unnaturally sinister because it is made clear that Maria has never been afraid of any of her previous lovers, including those who had physically abused her. It is, however, Wing's abnormal hatred towards his own child, culminating in his murdering the baby out of spite, that establishes that Wing operates outside of commonly recognised standards of morality and decency within the West Indies.

---

<sup>168</sup> Shiva Naipaul, 'The Beauty Contest', *A Man of Mystery and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 1 – 11. Further references to this short story will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>169</sup> Ismith Khan, 'The Magic Ring', *A Day in the Country* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1994), pp. 34 – 52 and Paule Marshall, 'British Guiana', *Soul Clap Hands and Sing* (Washington D.C.:

Throughout the text, Wing makes the strange complaint that Maria loves their baby more than she loves him and, on at least one occasion, Maria suspects Wing of deliberately hurting their child. In general, however, Maria disregards Wing's complaints because she cannot comprehend that a father could be truly jealous of his child's relationship with its mother. Such an idea is beyond her moral frame of reference; and indeed, the author takes care to demonstrate that although Maria and her friends might be outside of the conventional norms of "respectable" middle-class West Indian morality, they do have moral centres. Thus, Maria is depicted as going to mass regularly and as having a strong, protective instinct for her child. Similarly, when Philogen and Maria plot how Maria might escape from Wing and Maria mistakenly believes that Philogen is suggesting that they kill him, Philogen responds quickly: "I ain' dat sort; I respec' human life, if even it's only a Chink" (Mendes, 'Her Chinaman's Way', p. 108). By establishing their morality, particularly their respect for human life, the contrast between Philogen and Maria, as representatives of West Indian morality, and Wing as a representative of a Chinese attitude towards life is made more striking.

That Wing's attitude and behaviour is somehow connected to the fact that he is Chinese is suggested throughout the text. For example, the choice of the title – 'Her Chinaman's Way' rather than something more individual like 'Hong Wing's Way' – suggests that Wing's character and behaviour are indicative of any "Chinaman". Similarly, the adjectives used to describe Wing, words like "sleek", "mysterious" and "enigmatic", are typically associated with Chinese characters in general, albeit in this story, they conjure up sinister impressions. As a generic representative of the

---

Howard University Press, 1988), pp. 67 – 127. Further references to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

members of the Chinese shopkeeping class in Trinidad, Wing's portrayal solidifies the image of the Chinese as a dangerous element in West Indian creole society.

The assertion of a distinct separation between Chinese and other West Indians along ethical and moral lines is reflected in depictions of a similar division excluding the Chinese from creole social and cultural space. In *Mr. On Loong*, for example, John is only comfortable, and accepted by, those who are themselves outside the social norms of their society. But while in the case of his friends, they have the ability to be re-incorporated into society if they would choose to conform to their norms, John's alienation is more complete because of his Chinese identity. Maria and Wing are also divided by a socio-cultural gap. Part of Maria's inability to be at ease with Wing lies in the fact that she cannot understand him: "She had felt that she would never get to understand him; and though she had been living with him for such a long time, she had never been able to understand him" (ibid., p. 105). In contrast, of her relationship with Adolphus, the creole man with whom she embarks on an affair, it is said that Maria "understood him well" (ibid., p. 114).

That Maria and Adolphus share a cultural base is made evident in her daydream of how they will spend Christmas day together – eating pelau and rice and drinking rum – activities which it does not seem that she would engage in with Wing. Importantly, Maria and Adolphus also share an understanding of appropriate behaviour between women and men that is lacking in Maria's relationship with Wing. In particular, Maria retains a certain amount of control in her relationships with creole men that is missing in her relationship with Wing, namely that women need not be entirely submissive to their male partners. For example, upon learning that her last lover was keeping another woman, Maria gives him such a thorough cussing that he "slinked off like a whipped puppy" (ibid., p. 104). Even Adolphus is described as



exhibiting a certain docility towards her. Such gestures are not present in Maria's interactions with Wing. Indeed, the lack of common cultural reference points leaves Maria and Wing largely unknowable to each other.

As discussed earlier, West Indian identity in fiction is often wrapped up in an image of financial oppression and struggle. Most images of the Chinese, however, do not depict them as participating in what is so often represented as the defining West Indian experience. It is often the little details inserted into the text that indicate the vast distance of the Chinese community from this experience, such as the comparison between Laura and the unseen Chinese woman, Mary, in *Miguel Street*. Both are the mothers of eight children, but Laura cares for her children with a rough tenderness borne out of her struggle for financial security. In contrast, notes the narrator,

Mary took really good care of her children and never spoke harshly to them. But Mary, mark you, had a husband who owned a shop, and Mary could afford to be polite and nice to her children after stuffing them full of chop-suey and chow-min, and chow-fan, and things with names like that. (Naipaul, *Miguel*, p. 85.)

Similarly, in 'The Magic Ring', the large chasm of financial experience between the boy's father and the shopkeeper accounts for their different treatment of the boy. The Chinese man is financially and physically separated from the financial insecurity in which the boy's father lives and has the resources to nurture the boy physically and emotionally. The father, unemployed and lacking prospects can offer his son only what he has experienced in life – abuse and ugliness<sup>170</sup>.

The relationship between Black creole women and Chinese men also expresses a perceived distance between the Chinese community's financial experience and that of the broader creole community. Maria's involvement with Wing is based on

---

<sup>170</sup> Similarly, in *The Hills of Hebron*, Chin-Quee, although a cruel, quarrelsome and generally unattractive character demonstrates caring for his daughter. He showers her with toys and clothes and

the fact that he can provide her with a better financial existence as a shopkeeper while in 'The Wharf Rats', Maura's fantasies of escaping the boxcar tenements of the West Indian labour camp are focused on San Tie because she believes that by marrying him, she will literally cross over to the "right side of the tracks" and enter a world vastly different from her own – "a world of silks and satins"<sup>171</sup>.

In 'Song of Sixpence', calypso is identified as the expression of true Trinidadian experience and identity<sup>172</sup>. The lyrics of the calypso in the story, indicates that the defining experience of the "true" Trinidadian, is that of financial difficulty: "It had a time in this colony/ When everybody have money excepting me/ I can't get a work no matter how I try/ It look as if good times pass me by" (ibid., p. 138). "Good times" do not seem to ever pass by the members of the Chinese community, however. When Razor Blade is rich, for example, he spends his money at high-class Chinese restaurants on St. Vincent Street. When times are bad, he looks for food in the cheaper Chinese restaurants. Whether times are good or bad for other members of the community, the Chinese appear to keep on making money. Even when Razor Blade flees the restaurant without paying for his meal, it is clear that the waitress will end up bearing the cost out of her wages, not the Chinese owner.

The financial and cultural distance between the Chinese and other West Indians creoles translates into a social distance. At times, this is indicated by a certain

---

quarrels with her Black mother over what he believes is her inadequate care of the girl. Even in 'Jakes Makes', Chang is portrayed as demonstrating some particular regard for his unacknowledged daughter.

<sup>171</sup> Eric Walrond, 'The Wharf Rats', *Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, ed. by E.A. Markham (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1996), pp. , 95 – 107, p. 101. Indeed, so far removed is San Tie from Maura's day-to-day experience, that he appears impervious to the effect of the obeah that "honeycombed the life of the Negro labouring camps" (p. 95).

<sup>172</sup> Samuel Selvon, "Song of Sixpence", *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, ed. by E. A. Markham (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1996), pp. 134 – 145. Further reference to this story will be given after quotation in the text. The link between calypso and belonging in Trinidad space is given vivid expression when Rahamut claims "I is a Creolize Trinidadian, *oui*" on the basis of what he knows about calypsos (p. 141). A rare example of including the Chinese within a description of economic struggle occurs in Samuel Selvon's 'Down the Main', *Ways of Sunlight* (Essex: Longman Caribbean



social flexibility available to the Chinese that seems related to the perception that they are not quite a part of the society. In *A Morning in the Office*, Olga Yen Tip is permitted certain social freedoms that would not be unacceptable in the other characters. For example, she speaks to Miss Henery and Mrs. Hinckson with a familiarity that would never be tolerated from Mr. Jagabir, much less the office boy or the office cleaner. Olga also seems to move, to some extent, within their social circles for she gossips with Miss Henery about attending a social function at which a man who wants to marry Miss Henery is present. Another interesting detail is the comment that Olga “had her own friends – Chinese as well as coloured middle-class – and there were at least three young men, extremely eligible husbands, very much bent on marrying her” (Mittelholzer, p. 209). It is never made clear whether these potential spouses are Chinese or coloured, as if this detail does not matter in Olga’s situation. As such it is a significant breach from the rigid social boundaries depicted throughout most of the text, particularly in light of the fact that it is made clear that Miss Bisnauth is expected to marry an Indian, and Miss Henery and Mrs. Hinckson are expected to marry coloured, upper middle-class gentlemen.<sup>173</sup>

*A Morning in the Office* also suggests outsider status for the Chinese on another level. Olga’s wealthy relatives live a similar lifestyle to that of other creoles of their financial standing, but it is unclear whether they are actually a part of that

---

Limited, 1973), pp. 38 – 49. In this story, a Chinese character joins the group seeking better economic opportunities in Venezuela.

<sup>173</sup> Other examples of social flexibility allowed to the Chinese as outsiders to the social hierarchy include San Tie’s seeming freedom to move from labouring camps, to bush, to city life in ‘The Wharf Rats’ and Sally’s, the White creole in Marion Patrick Jones’ *Pan Beat* (Port of Spain: Columbus Publishers Ltd., 1973), desire to date Dave Chow, although “she would never have the courage to go around with coloured boys” (p. 39). In Deryck M. Bernard’s ‘Ben’, *Going Home and Other Tales from Guyana* (Oxford: Macmillan Education), pp. 1 –5, Laughie, the Chinese grocer’s, shop is outside of middle-class respectable space as symbolised in Aunt Hildred’s shop. Acceptable codes of behaviour (exaggerated in Aunt Hildred’s shop) are irrelevant at Laughie’s. A similar vision of the Chinese shop as being a space outside of middle-class conventions occurs in Olive Senior’s ‘The Tenantry of Birds’, *Arrival of the Snake Woman and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989), pp. 46 – 61 when Noelene comments that her socially ambitious mother would never



creole space or whether they exist in a separate, parallel space. In *Crown Jewel*, however, no such vagueness exists. William Hoo is wealthy enough to own estates, race horses and a home in the exclusive St. Clair neighbourhood, but is unaccepted by his neighbours, considered but a “low-class merchant” (de Boissière, p. 50). Hoo is also positioned outside of the working class even though he has endured similar financial struggle<sup>174</sup>. The Chinese community in *Crown Jewel* is also depicted as being particularly “clannish”, demonstrating a loyalty to each other as Chinese rather than to the greater West Indian society as a whole. Chin Toon’s decision to only speak to other Chinese during labour negotiations with the peelmen suggests this disregard for other members of society. The same dynamic is evident in the fact that Hoo’s accountant and assistant accountant both believe that their jobs, and respective wages, are directly due to the fact that they share the same ethnicity as their boss. Essentially, *Crown Jewel* depicts a Chinese community who actively preserves its difference and distance from a broader West Indian community that finds a sense of community in labour concerns.

Perhaps the most important distinction that *Crown Jewel* makes in terms of defining Chinese belonging is the portrayal of the Chinese as being outside of the political community identified as the nation. The novel fictionalises a nascent Trinidadian independence movement and identity. Both are portrayed as developing out of working class consciousness and the labour unrest of the 1930s. Despite the seeming inclusiveness of this site of nationhood – as evidenced by the individuals of various classes and ethnic groups involved in the struggle – the Chinese are situated in

---

patronise such an establishment. Further references to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>174</sup> When Hoo had started his shop “he had worn flourbag pants and slept among the goods, the mice and the cockroaches in the back of his shop” (p. 50).

opposition to or outside of working class political and labour interests, and are therefore, excluded from the nation.

All the Chinese characters in the novel exploit members of the working class and become symbols of the power that the exploited labourers are struggling against to come into existence as a nation. Hoo, takes advantage of Elena's desperate need for employment by paying her significantly less than the previous employee in the post and giving her measly bonuses. Hoo's year-end party provides particularly dramatic evidence of his exploitation. The party, supposedly thrown to thank his employees for their hard work throughout the year, becomes a demonstration of their vulnerability in that Hoo expects the workers to make excessively flattering toasts in his honour (when Elena fails to give a satisfactory speech, she is promptly fired). So beaten down are the employees that their only defiance is the weak joke that the meal Hoo has provided consists of horse-meat. Their laughter falls flat, however, when one realises that if true, the joke would be on them, for they would be too afraid to refuse to eat it.

A similar separation from working class interests is evident in the behaviour of Chin Toon during the strike. Chin Toon so disdains the workers that he initially does not bother to attend the labour negotiations. When he does deign to attend, neither he nor the other Chinese baker shows any solidarity with the workers, wondering instead, "What do Chin Toon and I care about all of you and your resolutions?" (ibid., p. 188). Chin Toon's total alienation from working class concerns is most obviously illustrated when he refuses to grant a wage increase and orders his bakery closed because he believes that "When their bellies get empty they will come to me – cheap, cheap" (ibid., p. 191). Even Yankee, the friend of the novel's labour leader, Le Maître, is distanced from what is being identified as the Trinidadian nation. He does not, for example, provide his hall free of charge for the meetings Le Maître holds.

Similarly, he might be the only person who hires Popi, but the job he gives him is as a smuggler<sup>175</sup>.

The representation of Yankee also emphasises the concept that one does not necessarily have to be in direct opposition to West Indian working-class interests to be portrayed as an outsider to West Indian nation space. Non-member status is accorded to those who are just disinterested in those issues that affect the West Indian working classes. In this regard, it is the little details of non-participation, rather than overt opposition to the working class that identify the Chinese as an alien presence. For example, no Chinese is shown making representation to the Commission investigating the conditions in the West Indies, although an Indian is present along with some Blacks. Similarly, it is noted that Indian shopkeepers, rather than Chinese shopkeepers, feed the protestors on their long march to government house, a point that is even more significant if one realises that all the previous references to shopkeepers have been Chinese. In the dramatic scene when the workers break into Yankee's shop for the kerosene that they will use to burn the policeman, Yankee's reaction is to hide the shop's cash in some rice and sit on it, guarding it with a knife. He does nothing to prevent them from attacking the policeman just as he does nothing to help them, his alienation from the event demonstrated subtly when he tells the mob to get the kerosene themselves. He positions himself out of the conflict, showing loyalty only to himself<sup>176</sup>. In a less dramatic but more poignant moment, this sense of distance between the Chinese and working class Trinidadians is captured in the image of

---

<sup>175</sup> In 'Money Can't Play', a similar image of the Chinese disengagement from working class struggles occurs when the shopman is depicted standing on the dock, carelessly telling the hungry villagers, 'Ship don't always come wid food' (p. 10).

<sup>176</sup> The burning alive of a policeman fictionalised in *Crown Jewel* was based on a real incident that occurred in the labour unrest of 1930s Trinidad. Interestingly, in Michael Anthony's rewriting of the incident in 'Butler on the Road', *The Chieftain's Carnival and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group, 1993), pp. 143 – 161, the Chinese shopkeeper of the shop where the kerosene is obtained also takes a non-active role, this time, hiding beneath the counter.



careworn Elena packing her and her mother's shabby possessions in the hovel of their home, while across the street, well-dressed and light-hearted Chinese women alight from cars to attend a dance.<sup>177</sup>

The perceived distance of the Chinese from the political community of the West Indies is central to the structure of Naipaul's novel *Guerillas*<sup>178</sup>. *Guerillas* opens with the image of a landscape littered with abandoned, rusting cars. These cars symbolise the state of the nation in which any progress to a revitalised and revamped society has become an arrested journey, replaced by a national (and international) make believe game of revolution: "Everybody is pretending that something exists that doesn't exist" (ibid., p. 30). Instead of a desire for change, the unnamed West Indian nation and England, its former colonial mistress, are locked in an obscene cycle of violence in which they take turns at playing violater and violated, but which, ultimately, does not overthrow their original power positions. It is "a place that had exhausted its possibilities", where, as the characters learn in the party game they play, "no one will make a fresh start or do anything new"; a novel peopled with the absurd:

---

<sup>177</sup> Chinese characters are consistently represented outside of political space in West Indian fiction. In N.D. Williams' *Ikael Torass* (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1976), for example, not only does the Chinese shopkeeper lock up the cash register at the first sign of trouble, Precious, the part-Chinese freshman, does not participate in the student protest. In McKenzie's 'Stuck in the Maid's Room', Chinese distance from the political community is demonstrated in an obvious fashion in their flight from the country in the light with the establishment of a more working-class friendly political regime. More subtle is the detail of their insistence on calling their maids "maids" even though it is deemed politically incorrect to call one's "brothers and sisters" "maids". Such behaviour clearly identifies them as outsiders to the space of "nation family". In Michael Reckford's 'Dog Food', *The Faber Book of Contemporary Caribbean Short Stories*, ed. by Mervyn Morris (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1990), pp. 175 –180, the Chinese manager's distance from the rioters in the grocery store is symbolised both in the fact that his office is on an elevated platform and that he continues to discuss business with the unnamed narrator, in spite of the turmoil around them. In *Mr. On Loong*, John is also alienated from the political environment because it is split antagonistically along colour lines, and, as a Chinese, John is not considered part of the "colour scheme". It is this alienation, however, that permits him to contribute to any worthy cause he feels to support and to treat his employees based only on their job performance – he has no political alliances. As John himself put it: "I am just a lonely Chinese . . . I am a perfect neutral . . . Whatever I do is wrong" (p. 247). His conclusion that whatever he does is wrong, is as significant, however, because it suggests that neutrality is not acceptable in terms of belonging in West Indian space. Further references to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>178</sup> V.S. Naipaul, *Guerrillas* (London, England: André Deutsch Limited, 1975). Further references to this novel will be given after quotation in the text.

a guerrilla activist who respects authority and is more interested in making gestures of revolution than in achieving actual revolutionary results; an English liberal with no political views who treats her politics as the latest fashion; rioters who restrain themselves from causing any real damage, waiting for some authority figure to descend on them and “dish out licks and pick up the pieces”; and a Chinese leader of a Black revolution, Jimmy Ahmed (ibid., pp. 50, 149 and 189).

Jimmy’s falseness as a revolutionary leader is signified by his Chinese identity. As Meredith puts it, there is something seen as fundamentally erroneous in the images of a Chinese shopkeeper “in tune with the aspirations of black people” (ibid., p. 207). One of the earliest indications that Jimmy’s Chinese status is to be understood as symbolic of the novel’s false revolution occurs when Jimmy writes in the persona of “Clarrissa” after his first encounters with Jane. Writing in character, Jimmy imagines himself distanced and superior to the mass of Black revolutionaries he supposedly leads. When re-inscribing their first meeting, Jimmy imagines Jane’s (that is, “Clarrissa’s”) reaction to him in the following language: “I am amazed at . . . the way he gets these black louts to respect him and behave with discipline . . . You wouldn’t believe that he can be so different from them” (ibid., pp. 39 – 40). On another occasion he writes, “. . . he is like a prince helping these poor and indigent black people, they’re so shiftless, no one will help them *least of all their own*” (ibid., p. 62, emphasis added). The key point of these passages is that Jimmy does not consider himself to be part of these “black louts”; that they are not his “own”. Indeed, prior to his time in England, Jimmy had tried to associate himself with the Chinese community and their issues, “. . . talking about going to China to advise Mao-Tse-Tung” (ibid., p. 141). In this way, his Chinese status makes mockery of the image of Jimmy as a Black leader, much less a Black revolutionary. It is no wonder then, that



at the time of the riot, Jimmy is not seen as the leader of the rioters, but is considered to be on the other side, or as Harry puts it, “. . . at a time like this he is just another Chinaman” (ibid., p. 191).

The absurdity of Jimmy's position as Black revolutionary leader and, by extension, the revolution itself, is further re-inforced by his shopkeeper background. The revolution is supposedly based on an opposition between the “haves” and the “have nots”. To fit himself into this space, Jimmy must demonstrate that he is one of the “have nots”. He attempts to do so on the basis of his shopkeeper background: “I'm a worker. I was born in the backroom of a Chinese grocery” (ibid., p. 27). This background, Jimmy claims, stimulated in him a desire to bring about changes in his society. The irony is, of course, that the traditional position of the shopkeeper in the West Indies is as a capitalist not as part of the labouring classes and therefore, Jimmy is one of the “haves”.

At one point, Jimmy tells Jane that because his father was a shopkeeper, “I suppose that's why I've always felt hungry” (ibid., p. 23). Jane accepts the romantic image he creates without much consideration because she is not serious about West Indian revolution. If she had been, she would have realised that, as the child of a shopkeeper, Jimmy would have been one of the least “hungry” people on the island. By contrast, Meredith is painfully aware of this reality. His words demonstrate the huge gap between Jimmy and the Black masses that renders Jimmy's position as a Black revolutionary ludicrous:

I used to envy Jimmy. And most boys were like me, eh. A shop – how could a thing like that ever go bust? A shop had everything. It was a place where your mother sometimes sent you to get things on trust . . . Jimmy's mother was a very pretty woman . . . I used to envy old Leung, and I used to think: You can get a woman like that only if you have money, if you have a shop. To me that was just a fact of life, that *our women* went to live with Chinese shopkeepers. There was nothing



you could do about it. Nobody had to tell me anything. I knew *that side of life* was closed to me. (ibid., p. 143, emphasis added).

In this long passage, Meredith establishes a boundary between Blacks and Chinese, “us” and “them”, “our side” and “their side”, that is drawn along a division of financial interests and experiences.

Jimmy’s Chinese shopkeeper background also reveals the futility of the revolution on a more basic level. Simply, Jimmy does not have the knowledge to lead a revolution that is nominally based on the land. This point is significant for the novel suggests that a true dismantling of West Indian societies’ oppressive regimes would require a total change of lifestyle and ambitions represented by a return to the land and communal-based living. The choice of a Chinese shopkeeper to lead such a movement points to the very insincerity with which their revolution is undertaken and the foreseeable failure of the commune because “You can’t go back to the land as a gesture. You can’t pretend. The land is a way of life.” (ibid., p. 204) .

Jimmy’s Chinese background also positions him outside of the historical frame of reference in which the national community is being located. For example, the posters featuring Jimmy are captioned with the words: “I’m nobody’s slave or stallion” (ibid., p. 17). The words encapsulate the official spirit of the revolution, namely, the challenge to the history of slavery and its dehumanisation of the Black man; however, under a picture of a Chinese man, despite the fact that he is made to appear “more negroid than he was”, they take on an empty ring (ibid.). The Chinese experience in the West Indies never encompassed slavery, nor were Chinese men ever used to impregnate slave women to increase the slave populations.

Distanced from the historical and financial markers used to define the national community, Jimmy’s day-to-day and social experiences as Chinese also sets him apart

in very basic ways. A telling example of this occurs in England, when Jimmy describes a childhood game in which the complexion of one's future spouse was said to be indicated by a banana peel. Jimmy tells the story as part of the anti-colonial rhetoric of the revolution he is spouting – using it as evidence of the absorption of colonial values with regard to colour and complexion by West Indians. However, the story also points to the very different experience that he has had from the Black masses he supposedly represents. Meredith claims that neither he nor his fellow Black creoles have ever heard of the game, much less played it. Meredith's total ignorance of such a game re-emphasises the idea of a significant social distance between the Chinese community's experience in the West Indies and that of the Black creoles – a difference so extreme that Meredith can claim that "when Jimmy talked about this country, I couldn't recognize it" (ibid., pp. 205 – 206).

Just as the acceptance of Jimmy as the leader of a Black revolution by English liberals exposes their non-commitment to revolutionary ideals, the attitudes towards the Chinese on the part of the Blacks is used to indicate their lack of real desire for revolution. For example, Harry suggests that the rioters will focus their rage on the Chinese as representatives of the system that exploits them; and although this is true, the rioters also treat the Chinese with a certain amount of gentleness. Thus, although Harry predicts that a couple Chinese shops will be burnt down during the riots, he does not believe that there will be any actual loss of life. In fact, after the so-called riot, Roche notes that: "the city showed little damage . . . even in the streets of the Chinese wholesale food shops and the Syrian cloth shops, though a shop had been blackened at the pavement level, its upper floors still looked whole" (ibid., pp. 198 – 199). There is, in other words, no intention, to actually cause substantial damage to the system that the Chinese community is deemed to represent. It is no wonder then,

that when Bryant visits the Chinese café on his night out, and begins to act aggressively, the Chinese shopkeeper “hardly blinked” (ibid., p. 36). He knows that, like the riot, it is all noise and no substance – only “a little scene” that represents no real threat to him (ibid.).

The texts examined thus far, have signaled the boundaries of West Indian nationhood on very specific terms. Belonging within West Indian space has been closely identified with a community that is defined in terms of suffering and struggle against the exploitative power structures of the colonial regime. Although not specifically marked out in terms of ethnicity, its boundaries are associated with the Black creole labouring classes such that their moral and social codes, as well as their political interests and historical experience, are depicted as central components of “being West Indian”. They point to a definition of West Indian space as Black creole space, the boundaries of which have been made clear by using the Chinese community to mark out its limits. The Chinese are the outsiders, the “Others” to the West Indian. As such, it is no surprise that Chinese characters so often become symbols of the general alienation of the modern human condition in West Indian texts or are the only characters with enough distance to see the larger themes and issues in West Indian experience. This is the case in the novels *Pan Beat*, *The Pagoda*, and *Mr. On Loong*.

*Pan Beat* essentially tells a story of West Indian disillusionment caused by the emptiness of the ambitions and dreams of the first post-independence generation. The novel reunites a group of former sixth form friends who, as they are reacquainted, are forced to reveal the “mask of living” behind which they have hidden their shallow, insecure and meaningless lives (Patrick Jones, p. 154). One of the members of their group is missing, however. It is Dave Chow who had long ago realised the emptiness



of their ambitions when he concluded that: "One is always whoring for something . . . when we grow up we will sell ourselves for some damn thing" (ibid., p. 28). Rather than continue in this way, Dave Chow chooses suicide.

Dave Chow's ability to see so clearly and so early the falseness of their positions is linked to the fact that he is fundamentally an outsider. It is true that he is a member of their sixth form steel band and that he even dates one of the Black girls in the group, but at the same time, an aura of alienation constantly surrounds him. The middle-class parents, for example, blame Dave Chow for the existence of the disreputable and socially questionable steel band "instinctively, because that Chinese man couldn't be trusted" (ibid., p. 3). Similarly, he is remembered as "a slight Chinese boy *always out of everything*. His pan needed tuning, he never played football, he never joined the cadets" (ibid., p. 31, emphasis added).

Like Patrick Jones, Powell is concerned with delving beneath "the fabulous masquerade" that is life. Powell's investigation into how identities are fabricated and worn like costumes relies heavily on a preconceived understanding of the Chinese. Who better to serve in an examination of the possibilities and limitations involved in the creation of a new identity in the West Indies than through an "outsider. The foreigner. The newcomer" (Powell, p. 33)? How better to acknowledge the power issues involved in the imposition of identities, most importantly stereotypes, than by examining the well-established stereotype of the Chinese shopkeeper? What better way to signify the instability of identity and the choices made in its construction than by utilising the "in-between status" of the Chinese in the West Indies? And, how better to mount an investigation into the depths of knowledge concealed by identities and the inability of identities to reveal the totality of the individual than by taking a closer look at the silent, unknowable Chinese? Powell's examination of the alienating

aspects of constructed identities and their constraints works because Lowe is such a familiar stranger; that is, because the stereotype of the Chinese in the West Indies as an alien is so well-established.

Questions about how identities are created are also at issue in *Mr. On Loong*. Although Standish suggests that identities are largely the result of racial characteristics, he demonstrates some awareness of external forces involved in the construction of identities as revealed in the pressure for individuals to choose labels or categories into which to place themselves throughout the novel. Thus, on one of the few occasions that John complains about being different, his friend confirms that John is different because he lives his life without labels, without the preset loyalties, biases and prescribed behaviour and attitudes:

In this world, for reasons I don't profess to understand, people love labels. They like to identify their fellow creatures by labels. They like to say: here is a black man, a white man, or a yellow man. They like to call their fellows heathen or Christians; Catholics or Protestants; Jews or Gentiles. They insist upon one wearing a political label. They group occupations according to whether they are respectable, or outside the pale . . . Now you complain of being made to feel 'different' and I tell you that, by the sort of standards we are talking of, you *are* 'different'. (Standish, p. 88)

That Standish believes there is benefit in freedom from the limits of a prescribed social categories that John's Chinese status allows him is clear; after all, John is able to form his own political and moral opinions, to have the freedom to develop loyalties to individuals based on who they are as persons rather than on what group they belong to, and to act simply on the basis of what he believes is right and wrong. However, this freedom comes at a cost. John remains as solitary as his views.

Like Patrick Jones and Powell, it is no accident that Standish explores individual ability to make choices free from prescribed expectations and attitudes defined by society's "labels" through a Chinese character. Indeed, Standish is even

more explicit in establishing “Chiney-ness” as the underlying reason for John’s outsider status because he believes that the Chinese are, as a people, less prone to absolutes than Westerners. Of the Chinese, Standish writes: “. . . they are not so definitive as the rest of the world. They do not insist that black is black and white is white and that there are no intermediate shades. The greys exist in Chinese thought in an infinite number . . . (Standish, p. 91). Thus, John’s “placelessness” and inability to fit into his society is amplified by the fact that he is a Chinese in the West Indies a status that positions him as essentially alone.

“Alien” or “outsider” is one of the most important images of the Chinese in West Indian texts in terms of setting out the boundaries of the nation. It is an image that is fundamental to establishing the limits of nationhood by identifying who is not included therein; or, to paraphrase Bhabha, the construction of the West Indian national space through discourse demands an articulation of difference (Bhabha, ‘Other Question’, p. 67). But since stereotypes are “an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power”, these images are never completely settled (ibid., p. 66). As the next section demonstrates, representations of the Chinese not only define who West Indians are not, they also identify who West Indians are. They set boundaries not only within the nation but also without by signifying the unique quality of the West Indies to a world audience. In this way, representations of the Chinese shift from the depiction of outsiders to important insiders within West Indian spaces.

## **The Boundary Without**

In West Indian fiction, behaviours, experiences and values gain credibility as particularly “West Indian” when it can be demonstrated that they affect even the Chinese communities. It is this sense of “even” – this suggestion of reaching an



outermost limit – associated with the Chinese that makes their images important to defining an outer boundary to West Indian space. They are represented as the limit of the National Self and the measure by which such norms can be identified as being truly West Indian. Such images provide reassurance that there is an overarching commonality and solidarity throughout West Indian space that transcends the limitations of ethnic-based national identities and the destructive divisions caused by colonialism.

A shared educational system has long been understood to be an important means of developing national solidarity on a shared cultural base<sup>179</sup>. West Indian fiction often portrays the education system as the crucible in which nation as a space of belonging is formed. Such is the case in Mittelholzer's *A Morning in the Office*. Although Olga seems to have some social freedoms as described earlier, for the most part, her behaviour is in accordance with the societal norms that govern the behaviour of the other members of staff. For example, Olga always addresses the White assistant manager as "Sir", indicating her lower social position. In contrast, both Miss Henery and Mrs. Hinckson, upper middle-class coloureds, insist on addressing him by his name, Mr. Murrain, to demonstrate that they do not consider him to be their social superior. At the same time, Olga is in a higher class than the Black office boy, thus she shows little deference for him, greeting him simply by his last name.

Olga's acceptance of the class hierarchies is rooted in the fact that she has an "outlook of British West Indians", which in turn, is directly related to her education (Mittelholzer, p. 208). Mittelholzer describes her schooling in this manner: "Together with her negro, East Indian, Portuguese, Spanish and colored school companions, she had grown up with the *Royal Reader*, *Gentle Jesus*, *meek and mild*, Sir Walter Scott

and *Drink to me only with thine eyes*" (ibid.). In situating Olga within this educational environment, Mittelholzer provides a powerful image of how the perspectives of all West Indians, including the Chinese, were molded, at the same time as they were bound together, by the British-based educational system.

The same technique is used in McKenzie's short story 'The Grenada Defense League'<sup>180</sup>. The story reveals the shallow revolutionary gestures of five university students who determine to save Grenada from American imperialism by sailing from Jamaica to Grenada in a fishing boat armed with a few machetes. Foolish as their plan seems, it is not entirely out of line with the society in which they live. As in *Guerrillas*, it is not only the students who are engaged in making a pretense of revolutionary change; the narrator sees other evidence that the new socialist government has not brought about substantial change to Jamaican society. For example, a pool that was once clearly understood to be for the exclusive use of the upper middle-class, now has a new name that is supposed to indicate a new accessibility to all members of society. In reality, however, it is still only used by the upper middle-classes. Nothing has really changed.

That this attitude of playing revolutionary, so similar to that of *Guerrillas*, is typical of the majority of middle-class Jamaicans is suggested by including Sonny, a Chinese Jamaican, in the group of would-be revolutionaries. His acceptance into the group is so absolute that when Faddo, the rasta who is supposed to provide them with guns and military training meets the group and asks suspiciously, "Who the Chinee man? . . . It took them a moment to realize that he meant Sonny, and it took Sonny even longer to realize Faddo was referring to him" (McKenzie, 'Grenada Defense', p.

---

<sup>179</sup> In fact, Gellner argued that education was the deciding factor of whether or not the "high culture" on which he grounded his idea of nation could exist.

.141). Sonny is, the group informs Faddo "a bredda" (ibid.). The description claims Sonny as one of them on the basis of shared interests, values and beliefs which, it is suggested, exist because of their common educational experience. Sonny and some of the members of the group have known each other since highschool. The educational system had given them a shared basis on which to build friendships, which in its turn, allows them to develop their sense of community.

The process of community building essential to creating nation that occurs in the school is also vividly demonstrated in Samuel Selvon's novel, *A Brighter Sun*, when Tall Boy, the Chinese shopkeeper, sends his children to school for the first time. Upon their appearance in the schoolyard, the children are greeted with the refrain: "Chinee, Chinee never die/ Flat nose and chinky eye!". Not intimidated, they respond with racial insults of their own: "Nigger is ah nation/ Dey full of bodderation/ Meet dem by de station/ Dey stink wid perspiration" and to the Indo-Trinidadians, "Everybody know allyuh does use ah bottle of water in de w.c.". The schoolyard disintegrates into a cacophony of ethnic insults: "Chinese does eat cat an' dog!", "Nigger does smell stink wid perspiration!", "Coolie people does eat wid dey hands!", "Whitey cockroach!" and "Black tar-baby" (Selvon, *Brighter Sun*, p. 55).

*A Brighter Sun* ultimately asserts Selvon's belief in the ability of Trinidadians to transcend their differences to create an inclusive community. The schoolyard incident recognises the ethnic *mélange* that exists in Trinidad and the discord that sometimes exists when such groups come into contact with each other. But the fact that this episode takes place in a schoolyard and amongst children is highly significant, for in the next scene, the children are sitting side-by-side doing their schoolwork. The suggestion is that although there are differences, the shared

---

<sup>180</sup> Alecia McKenzie, 'The Grenada Defense League', *Satellite City and Other Stories* (Essex:



educational experience overrides them, creating a new sense of community and ability to work together. By focussing on Tall Boy's children in this episode, Selvon includes the Chinese community within this vision of a new Trinidadian society that is facilitated by the shared education.

School space is essentially a space of shared experience; and it is shared experiences, in general, that are often set out as the boundaries of West Indian space. In particular, shared histories of suffering are a key means of marking out an "us/them" boundary around nation. Although they appear less frequently, images depicting the Chinese as struggling against forms of exploitation and oppression similar to that of other West Indians not only includes them within the category of "us", it also solidifies the concept that suffering is the fundamental West Indian experience.

In *Turn Again Tiger*, the legacy of suffering under colonialism is explicitly affirmed as the grounds on which disparate peoples can claim solidarity and valid membership in the Trinidadian national community<sup>181</sup>. The Chinese experience of suffering is portrayed through the journey to manhood taken by the shopkeeper Otto, a journey that directly parallels that of the main character, Tiger. In the novel, Tiger, himself a symbol of the nation, must come to grips with the history of his Indian ancestors in Trinidad and the denigrating experience of sugar production before he reaches manhood. The same task awaits Otto.

For Tiger, the canefields represent degradation, humiliation and powerlessness. He only comes to the cane community of Five Rivers under the mistaken belief that his father will have ultimate control of the agricultural experiment

---

Longman Group UK Limited, 1992), pp. 124 – 148. Further references to this story will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>181</sup> Samuel Selvon, *Turn Again Tiger* (Port of Spain, and Kingston: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., [n.d.]). Further references to this novel will be given after quotation in the text.

being conducted there. When Tiger arrives, however, he finds White power structures in place in the form of the White overseer and his wife. Tiger reacts by feeling trapped within history: "it was like a circle. He was going back through the years, and he would be swinging his cutlass in the valley in the sun and a white man on a horse would come by and give him an order and he would say, "Yes, sir" and hurry to obey" (ibid., p. 48). His fears appear to come true when he stumbles across Robinson's wife sunbathing in the nude and his first reaction is terror. He remembers all the warnings of his childhood designed to protect the Indians in their vulnerable position against the White establishment: "Keep off the white man's land, don't go near the overseers house, turn your head away if you see the white man's wife" (ibid., p. 49). The remainder of the novel is about Tiger's coming to terms with his fears, self-loathing and feelings of powerlessness, culminating in a violent sexual encounter between Tiger and Robinson's wife in the canefields in which Tiger symbolically grapples with, and overcomes, his past.

Just as Tiger must come to grips with the history of the Indians in the canefields, Otto must also address the similar history of the Chinese in Trinidad if he is to mature. Like the Indians, the Chinese were brought to Trinidad originally as indentured labourers and in the canefields faced the same conditions as the Indians and the Africans before them – conditions designed to debase and deny their humanity. Thus, it is no accident that the ultimate negation of Otto's manhood, like Tiger's, takes place in the canefield – it is where Berta has her affair – and it is in the canefields where Otto must reclaim his manhood. For Otto, this occurs when he comes out from behind the counter and fights his wife's lover amidst the cane.

If the inclusive imagined nations of West Indian fiction are to have current relevancy, however, shared experience must be more than something that happened in

the past. It must continue to define the interactions, exchanges and perspectives of members on an everyday level. Images that depict the Chinese as being affected by events which impact the community as a whole are thus important means of signifying that such events are particularly "West Indian". In 'Wing's Way', for example, the villagers are trapped in Guyana, their lives as mangled and messy as the mangrove in Wing's picture. They live "small, tattered lives" and eke out "broken and truncated existence[s]", in a village that "appeared to be at the end of the world" ('Wing's Way', pp. 141 and 138). It is a space voided of dreams or hope and permeated with an aura of death. The small, squalid lives lived by the villagers are reflected in Wing's existence: "His life was defined by the ragged fence-wall of rusted galvanised sheets that ringed his property" (ibid., p. 141). Although Wing's heart is focused on China, there is no real indication that he will ever escape "the ramshackle chaos of a dying village" (ibid., p. 143). The closest he gets to freedom is the one evening a week that he and his family set apart to celebrate their Chinese heritage; but even here, escape is limited to but a few hours a week. The true futility of Wing's escape from this "place of shadows and loss of direction" is captured in the picture of the flamingo flying out of the swamp to which Wing is so attached (ibid.). Like Wing, the flamingo's flight is arrested – it never really leaves the swamp. Thus, through Wing's experience, the hopelessness and misery of village life becomes all-encompassing for the village inhabitants.

In 'The Beauty Contest', the inclusion of the Chinese into the narrative of nation is worked more subtly. The short story portrays a post-war West Indian society in a state of transition by focussing on a business competition between Mr. Prasad and Mr. Aleong, owners of the two hardware shops in Doon Town. The two had coexisted peacefully for a decade, but their easy relationship is strained when Aleong's son



returns from studying business in the United States and begins to make changes to his father's shop. His behaviour results in a business competition that culminates when both men sponsor contestants in a local beauty contest. Interestingly, the story never specifies whether the contestants are of matching ethnic backgrounds; that is, whether Mr. Aleong and Ma Fong Restaurant sponsor Chinese women while Mr. Prasad sponsors a girl of Indian descent. The fact that the men could be sponsoring different ethnicities and the conclusion of the story with Mr. Aleong's election as mayor suggests a certain amount of ethnic boundary crossing, and, more importantly, an acceptance of Chinese participation in the process of redefining and renegotiating West Indian space.

More than in the novel *A Brighter Sun* on which it is based, Selvon's play, 'Highway in the Sun', explores the impact of the war on Trinidad and the changes it brings to the nation. It depicts a world in which relationships and old understandings of community are being renegotiated in light of the war; namely, it is a time when "Is every man for himself" (Selvon, 'Highway', p. 12). This selfish individualism is demonstrated subtly, as when Joe constantly tells Tiger to leave him out of things, and more obviously, such as Boysie's dreams of leaving Trinidad and the doctors' refusals to help Urmilla during her difficult labour. That this rampant self-regard has permeated the society at all levels is indicated by the fact that Tall Boy is also affected by this mood. He turns his back on the communal view of village life when he builds a partition in his shop, separating the Americans from the locals and providing the American soldiers with better service because, in his words, "I know which side my bread butter" (ibid., p. 32).

Another recurring image of the Chinese in West Indian fiction in terms of establishing the existence of all-pervasive West Indian values is associated with the

manner in which their physical features are incorporated into West Indian ideas of beauty, particularly as they relate to the denigration of African features, a long-lasting value that was established within colonial discourse; namely, the Chinese are depicted as beautiful because they are not Black. This general acceptance of Chinese features as beautiful becomes an important means of demonstrating just how deeply rooted is the colonial rejection of African features within West Indian spaces.

In 'Jakes Makes', a critique of Jamaican society's inability to appreciate their African heritage is symbolised by the community's rejection of Jakes and his art. Jakes is considered a rebel in the neighbourhood partially because of his pride in his African heritage. He is "proud of his broad nose, his wide mouth and his coarse hair" and proud of the fact that "he had not a drop of anything besides African blood" (McKenzie, 'Jakes Makes', pp. 66 and 62). Similarly, Jakes' attraction to Grace is largely due to the fact that she had "the same deep black skin as Jakes". Her colour was perhaps the thing that most attracted Jakes" (ibid., p. 66). That Jakes' "Black pride" seems odd to his neighbours draws attention to the devaluation of Blackness by the community at large. It contrasts with their easy acceptance of Clarissa, Grace's part-Chinese daughter, as being beautiful. In fact, her features are so readily accepted and valued that as a teenager, Clarissa wins beauty contests<sup>182</sup>.

The widespread rejection of African features as beautiful is also an underlying component of Mendes' *Pitch Lake*<sup>183</sup>. The novel traces Joe da Costa's struggle for social advancement. In the process he has three affairs, none of which are with

---

<sup>182</sup> Interestingly, in *Miguel Street*, Eddoes' part-Chinese daughter also wins a beauty contest.

<sup>183</sup> Alfred H. Mendes, *Pitch Lake* (London: New Beacon Books Ltd., 1980). A similar contrast is made in Mendes' 'Her Chinaman's Way' when Philogen is described as "gaunt, ugly and black" (p. 105), while Maria, because of her mixed racial heritage, is portrayed as beautiful:

... her brown face handsome in an exotic way with its full lips, large nose and small eyes that told you there was Chinese blood in her veins ... Her voluptuous figure inherited from her half-breed Venezuelan mother, had always been sought after by the men in town. (Mendes, 'Her Chinaman', p. 104).

women who are dark, including Maria, a part-Chinese girl from the barrack yard; for in Joe's world, Blackness has no value. Thus, Rebecca, Myra's Black cook, although one of the kinder people in the text, is described in the most unflattering of terms: ". . . obese, . . . her large bust like a pillow within her bodice, her face hideous with its black skin, everted lips, splayed nose and small insidious eyes" (ibid., p. 88).

The same valuation of Chinese features because they are not African occurs more explicitly in *Ikael Torass*. One of the narrator's earliest experiences at university is to engage in a brief affair with a Chinese Jamaican girl, Precious. Precious is part of a group of light-skinned girls on campus who are known collectively as "the Octaroons". They are described as a:

. . . diminishing shade minority in society, they held on to the myth of their blessed superior status, their role as impartial witness to society's doings, though they couldn't resist chiding everyone and everything, and holding up fine noses to the mess they thought the island was in. Their clinging together was a vain attempt to maintain the purity of the shade, which, if it must be compromised, would not fall victim to the sharks circling the island and threatening to devour them like black night. (Williams, *Ikael Torass*, p. 148)

Their social status is directly related to the colour of their skin. Precious' acceptance by the group is the result of the fact that her Chinese ancestry, is more apparent than her Maroon heritage. This is made clear by the hostile reaction of her clique to her relationship with the narrator. Their disapproval is largely because he is a "Total *dark* stranger" (ibid., p. 143, emphasis added).

A Chinese mixed-race heritage also provides access to a certain amount of social status in Paule Marshall's 'British Guiana'. In this story, Sybil and her sister Murie began their lives outside the privileged "high-coloured" class to which Motley belongs. Nevertheless, in spite of these impediments to their social ambitions, both

---



Sybil and Murie are able to enter the higher echelons of society later in life. The story suggests that part of their ability to cross into this space is facilitated by their Chinese heritage and perhaps, lighter skin, in the contrast that is made with Sidney's failure to achieve his social ambitions. Sidney attributes part of the reason for his failure to the fact that: "I don't look white. My father and his father were like so". He raised a dark, angry hand" (Marshall, 'British Guiana', p. 95). Apparently, this colour barrier was not an issue for the sisters.

Many other examples exist throughout West Indian fiction in which images of the Chinese sharing lifestyle activities or values with other members of West Indian societies is used to identify such activities and values as "West Indian". For example, when the narrator of 'Jakes Makes' wants to demonstrate her rebellion against Jamaican society's conventions, she decides to become a Buddhist, noting that "even the Chinese in my class were the staunchest of Catholics" (McKenzie, 'Jakes Makes', p. 64). Similarly, in *A Morning in the Office* Olga's wealthy relatives, the Grangers, have entirely assimilated to British colonial attitudes towards class and wealth that run throughout Trinidadian society<sup>184</sup>. Indeed, so embedded in this space of typical West

---

<sup>184</sup> The Grangers are described as living in a three-storey house in the exclusive neighbourhood of Queen's Park West, owning a Packard, and taking drives around the Savannah on Sundays, as is the fashion. The most obvious indication of their assimilation to Trinidadian creole values is that they have dropped their Chinese surname. Significantly, Olga and the Grangers do not step outside the rigid hierarchy of social interactions prescribed by their society in that Olga does not socialise with her more wealthy relatives. She is not invited to functions at the Chinese consulate, for example, because her social sphere of existence is as far from the Grangers as Mr. Jagabir's is from Miss Bisnauth's.

A more common method of "normalising" situations as particularly West Indian is to simply include a Chinese character in the description of the event. This technique appears quite often: in Noel Williams 'Tourists', *The Crying of Rainbirds* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1992), pp. 39 – 44, for example, the Chinese teller's uncertainty as to how to handle the man who jumps the queue because she is unsure as to whether he might be someone important or "connected" on the island, demonstrates that she too is mired in the complicated social strata of the island. Her behaviour is contrasted with that of the tourist who, because he is not a part of this space, has the freedom to challenge the man. Similarly, in Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*, 3<sup>rd</sup> impression, Russell edition (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1964), the right of passage of exams, complete with the weight of family expectations and ambitions, is experienced by Anand's Chinese classmate as well as Anand and his cousin, while the discomfort Biswas feels in the presence of the Chinese receptionist is used to indicate how far away from "respectable" West Indian space he has become. Other examples include mention

Indian values are the Chinese that in 'British Guiana', Sybil actually becomes the symbol of West Indian middle-class values and priorities<sup>185</sup>.

'British Guiana' recounts the last day in the life of Motley. As a young man, Motley seemed destined to follow the social path that his life as a "high-coloured", privileged member of Guianese society had set out for him. He went to school abroad, married an equally fair-skinned and privileged member of society, and is offered a high-profile status job with British Guiana Broadcasting (BG Broadcasting). There are, however, indications that this behaviour is merely part of Motley's public persona and that his true self is actually in contradiction to these norms. After all, Motley hangs out at Ling's, a bar that caters to social outcasts, "the idle . . . the cheap thieves and coznors, the panderers . . . the brawlers" (ibid., p. 103)<sup>186</sup>. Also out of the norm is the rumour that he tried to lead the stevedores on strike when he was a young man, his obvious homosexual attraction for Sidney, and his long affair with Sybil.

The crisis point for Motley comes when, he is offered the job with BG Broadcasting – a job that would, in effect, secure his place within the middle-class establishment. Before he decides whether or not to take the job, Motley and Sybil go on a trip into the bush. Alone, in the jungle, the bush "closed around him, becoming

---

of Chinese participation in Carnival in Faustin Charles' "Signpost of the Phoenix", *Caribbean New Wave: Contemporary Short Stories*, selected by Stewart Brown (Heinemann International, 1990), pp. 43 – 52 and Paul Keens-Douglas' 'Slim Teet', *Tanti and de Oval, Selected Works of Paul Keens-Douglas* (1992), pp. 50 - 53; a Jamaican Chinese student experiencing the same sense of alienation as his fellow West Indian students in England in Christine Craig's 'The Virgin', *Mint Tea and Other Stories* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1993), 47 – 57; the inclusion of the 'slant-eyed girl' as a member of that society that rejects the narrator in Clyde Hosein's 'The Man at the Gate of the House of Refuge', *Caribbean New Wave: Contemporary Short Stories* selected by Stewart Brown (Oxford: Heinemann International, 1990), pp. 87 – 105; or a Chinese Jamaican immigrant to Florida retaining her heavy Jamaican accent in Alecia McKenzie's 'Natasha', *Satellite City and Other Stories*, op. cit., pp. 31 – 49. Wilson Harris is particularly successful at incorporating a Chinese presence into his fictional landscapes in this manner, as evident in the characters Magda and Chiung and Weng who appear in "The Whole Armour", *The Guyana Quartet* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. 239 – 352 and "The Secret Ladder", *The Guyana Quartet*, op. cit., pp. 353 – 464 respectively.

<sup>185</sup> In the same fashion, the part-Chinese Maria because the representative of barrack-yard society in Mendes' *Pitch Lake*.



another dimension of himself, the self he had long sought. For the first time this self was within his grasp. If he pursued this dark way long enough he would find it . . . and it would either shape his life . . . or destroy him" (ibid., p. 74). But before Motley can pursue this path to self-discovery, Sybil comes upon him. She immediately understands that if Motley were to choose "the bush", he would destroy his public persona and "with a protective cry she had rushed forward and placed herself between him and what could have been a vision of himself" (ibid., p. 75) By placing herself between Motley and "the bush", Sybil reasserts the public, respectable self as a barrier between Motley and his inner being. Thus, she and Motley return from their trip (significantly having never reached their destination in the interior) and Motley takes the job with the radio station.

In a similar fashion, Precious stands as a representative of the colonial-based middle-class West Indian value system that is rejected in *Ikael Torass*. As a member of "the Octaroons", Precious is distanced from the interests of the Black masses. In fact, these girls are known for the manner in which they hold themselves aloof from the majority of the other students. Precious is portrayed as being distanced from those events that touch at the heart of Jamaican experience, not just because she is Chinese, but because she is a member of the coloured middle-classes. Thus, Precious is not a part of the student protest, staying away until her father thinks it safe for her to return to campus, and is found nursing a sick Norwegian rather than caring for the welfare of her own fellow citizens at the novel's conclusion.

The pervasive influence of the colonial value system maintained by the coloured middle-classes in this text is also demonstrated in the similarity between

---

<sup>186</sup> The existence of Ling validates the idea of the Chinese as having ambivalent status in West Indian space in the sense that two Chinese women represent both established middle-class West Indian life (Sybil) and existence outside of that space (Ling).



Precious and the narrator's girlfriend Sharon. Both women represent a type of middle-class female West Indian conventionality. Sharon is described as:

Pretty face, yes, its complexion described by our island's beauty specialists as *sapodilla brown*, her hair long enough to hang down her back in enviable plaits; plumpish below the waist, a model of decent upbringing. Her father was a justice of the peace, and her mother a talkative energetic organizer of tea parties. She was the darling of the nuns at St. Hilda's – how warmly they remember *our Headgirl* who spoke so beautifully at the School's Speech Day, who played the piano for the school choirs at several music festivals. (Williams, *Ikael*, p. 38)

Although the novel does not provide much detail about Precious' past, her behaviour seems to correspond with Sharon's and suggests a similar upbringing. That Precious and Sharon appear to be so similar in spite of their different ethnic and national backgrounds provides a powerful image of the extensive and long-term influence of British colonial values throughout the West Indies.

Another important similarity between Precious and Sharon is the role that they are expected to play in relation to West Indian men; namely as "props" for them. Sharon is reared to be a perfect wife while Precious is "the perfect helpmate", someone to "wear around town" (*ibid.*, p. 150). The relationship between Precious and the narrator also underscores an abusive, poisoned level of interaction between men and women that the narrator perceives as the norm in an environment corrupted by colonialism. The narrator believes that the women on the island have

A curious desire to be hurt, slapped about, punished. They lived for the interstices, the moments of reconciliation, beautifully bitter, beautifully sweet; rejection and reclaim, injury then caring anew; bruised and thrown outside, then brought back into the hearth, for then love was reaffirmed, finely enriched, and tenderness was most sincere when it touched gently a wound not fully healed (*ibid.*, p. 150).

Precious' relationship with the narrator, although brief, bears the hallmarks of this type of exchange. In fact, from their first meeting the narrator thinks of her in terms of

a dog and treats her as such. That Precious, a Chinese woman, allows herself to be put in this position and responds by serving and self-sacrifice, even in matters of sex, underscores the novel's claim that such behaviour is typical of all West Indian women.

The images of the Chinese as active participants in the West Indies, of influencing and being influenced by other members of society, is clearly part of a discourse that uses creolisation to legitimise West Indian claims to nation. Through much West Indian literature, the representation of the Chinese community as being valid members of West Indian space becomes the *pièce de resistance* proving that a creolised community has indeed developed. Representations of the Chinese demonstrate creolisation in action and validate the permeation of creole culture in the West Indies in the sense that if *even* the Chinese can make a contribution to the society, then the society is truly creolized.

In Selvon's fiction, the celebration of Trinidad as a creole community is a continuing motif. Of particular concern for Selvon is to depict the Chinese as valuable members of their respective Trinidadian communities. Thus, he interrupts the plot of *A Brighter Sun* mid-way through the novel to insert a chapter, which, although focussed on Chinese Trinidadians, bears little relevance on the storyline. The chapter is little more than an attempt to bring the Chinese in from the margins of Trinidad's "story" and acknowledge their participation in Trinidadian society. The development of Tall Boy's character, particularly in the course of *Turn Again Tiger*, is more successful in this regard.

In *A Brighter Sun*, other than the awkward chapter on Chinese experience, Tall Boy remains somewhat distanced from the community as a whole. Although his shop is clearly central to the life of the villagers, his activities and interests do not easily

connect with them other than over the shop counter. Nevertheless, little details that Selvon inserts in the text, suggest that Tall Boy is not an absolute alien amongst the villagers. For example, Selvon claims that villagers indicate their acceptance of Chinese shopkeepers as one of their own when they give them a personal nickname, such as "Tall Boy" (as opposed to the generic "Chin", it would seem). Nevertheless, it is really only in *Turn Again Tiger*, that Tall Boy's integration into the village life is more explicitly enacted.

*Turn Again Tiger* is different in tone from *A Brighter Sun* in that the focus changes from the more personal account of Tiger's experience to a more explicit investigation of a community experience. This change of perspective has an immediate effect on how Tall Boy is represented. In fact, the Tall Boy of *Turn Again Tiger* is radically different from that of *A Brighter Sun*. Most obviously, Tall Boy is engaged and participating in affairs that affect his community. For example, he shows a personal interest in Tiger – even interfering in a business deal when he feels that Tiger is going to get the short end of the deal, an action that would have been almost unimaginable in the first novel. The most significant demonstration of Tall Boy's growing integration into the community, however, is revealed in his decision to attend Tiger's good-bye party.

This is the first time that Tall Boy has attended a village *fête*, simply because he has never been invited to one. Selvon writes: "nobody ever thought of asking Tall Boy. Tall Boy was the symbol of the shop . . . they never thought of him as a human being . . . Nobody ever thought of asking Tall Boy to come and this hurt him though he kept it to himself" (Selvon, *Turn Again*, pp. 14 – 15). Through these words, Selvon recognises a tendency among the greater West Indian community to marginalise the Chinese presence in their midst, although he suggests that this is done out of



thoughtlessness rather than malice. This thoughtlessness, however, is also revealed to be part of the process of creolisation, and part of what makes West Indian creole society so powerful; for, as the party scene demonstrates, Tall Boy has been slowly, and unconsciously incorporated into the villagers' lives. A unique solidarity has developed between villagers and shopkeeper without a conscious political decision to do so. This is strikingly revealed in the "non-reaction" of the villagers when Tall Boy appears at the party.

Tall Boy arrives at the *fête* with some trepidation, "prepared for a lot of exclamation at his presence. But no one said anything. In fact, it was as if he had been attending every fete in the village" (ibid., p. 15). The everyday contact that Tall Boy has had with the villagers has, without their awareness, created a broader understanding of community that is able to include the once alien presence of Tall Boy. Indeed, so embedded has Tall Boy become in village life that he is participating in local politics by the end of *Turn Again Tiger*<sup>187</sup>.

That this new and uniquely West Indian sense of belonging and acceptance is accomplished through mutual cultural exchanges is demonstrated after the party in *Turn Again Tiger* when Joe, a Black creole, teases Tall Boy with the words, "you is a real creolise Chinee", to which Tall Boy responds "you know that I just like one of you" (Selvon, *Turn Again*, p. 15). More significantly, the two make plans to visit each other's homes for dinner where they will share foods associated with their respective cultures, "peas and rice and callaloo" at Joe's and "puck chow and chowmin" at Tall Boy's (Selvon, *Tiger*, p. 16).

---

<sup>187</sup> So important is this moment in terms of establishing belonging, that Selvon re-inscribes it in 'Highway in the Sun', even though the play is actually a dramatization of *A Brighter Sun*. In the play, the party is thrown to celebrate the birth of Tiger's daughter rather than a good-bye party, but as in *Turn Again Tiger*, Tall Boy is omitted from the guest list. Again, Tall Boy decides to invite himself, warning Urmilla that she might see him later that evening. Urmilla registers no surprise at the idea that

The gradual creolisation of West Indian societies to create a new and authentically local culture is also the theme in Michael Anthony's short story 'Many Things'<sup>188</sup>. Here the dynamic process of creolisation is explored in the relationship between shopkeeper Chin and the young village boy, Allwyn. The creolisation of Chin is obvious. For most of the story, Chin is shown accommodating himself to his new West Indian environment. Thus, Chin decorates the shop for Christmas, a celebration that was unknown to him in Nanking. Anthony makes it clear that Chin's participation in the Christmas celebration is not just for business purposes. Instead, Chin actually enjoys the holiday, "It had come to mean something to him too" (Anthony, 'Many Things', p. 67). Similarly, Chin is shown testing out English words, greeting his wife with "Merry Christmas" and "Many things", apparently the English translation of the traditional Chinese Name Day greeting. However, since creolisation is not a one-way process, it is important for Anthony to demonstrate the influence that Chin also has on his new environment. This is accomplished through Chin's relationship with Allwyn and through the Name Day influences on the Christmas celebrations.

The impact that Chin has on his society is most evident in the changing attitude of Allwyn towards him. By the end of the story, Chin is no longer an oddity or an object of scorn for Allwyn, but is deemed worthy of friendship and respect. Allwyn has accepted Chin, or as Chin recognises, Allwyn "was getting used to him" (ibid., p. 66). More importantly, Allwyn is changed by Chin's presence. Midway through the story, Allwyn eavesdrops on Chin and Mai Ling and overhears them exchanging the traditional Chinese Name Day greeting. At first, Allwyn finds the

---

Tall Boy might attend, saying simply "I don't even know myself who and who coming"(Selvon, 'Highway', p. 24).

foreign language laughable and determines to pull another prank on the shopkeeper, but Allwyn changes his mind. Instead, he bows and greets Chin by saying, "Many things".

A number of important events are involved in this exchange that point to the creation of a creole space. First, Allwyn is impressed by the effort that Chin has put into decorating for the shop for Christmas. He sees that Chin is trying to share in the life of the community. Secondly, Allwyn is, for the first time, actually close to Chin's wife and is struck by her beauty. This sense of nearness between cultures is at the heart of theories on creolisation, for it is the close proximity of cultures that allows for an appreciation of their different aspects in addition to facilitating cultural exchanges. Indeed, the moment becomes a powerful image of cross-cultural exchange: the Christmas decorations surrounding the "pagan" Chinese and the words of a pagan holiday greeting in the mouth of a Christian boy at Christmas time.

The creolised nature of West Indian societies is also marked through the presence of the Chinese in another way. The settled Chinese of the West Indies are depicted as being significantly different from newer Chinese immigrants. Images of gaps between "home-born" and "local-born" Chinese are numerous throughout West Indian fiction: in 'The Grenada Defense League', Sonny's parents would prefer if he dated a Chinese girl, but Sonny disregards their wishes to chase after a Black Jamaican girl; in *A Morning in the Office*, Olga and her immediate family have lived so long in Trinidad that they have no knowledge of the Chinese language and as such, are said to be barred from a Chinese mindset; in *The Pagoda*, not only does Lowe's daughter marry a Black creole, she has no Chinese language or cultural traits; and in 'Wing's Way', Wing's children neither participate in nor understand their father's

---

<sup>188</sup> Michael Anthony, 'Many Things', *Cricket in the Road* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational



exercises and speak “imperfect, halting Chinese” (Woodroffe, p. 144). In *The Hills of Hebron*, the Chinese grocer specifically tries to keep his half-Black daughter separated from the rest of the community. She is not allowed to “mix with children of an alien race” (Wynter, p. 185). He even gives her a Chinese name. When she hits puberty he keeps her in the shop where he can ensure that she does not mix with any of the village men. Nevertheless, Chin-Quee ultimately fails at separating his daughter from the village. No one, including Chin-Quee, calls her by her Chinese name and, her awareness of the local song about Moses’ failed ascension, also demonstrates that she has some connection with the villagers. More significantly, she becomes the mother of Rose Brown, who herself is the symbol of hope for the people of Hebron.

An even more effective means of using the Chinese as a gauge of “West Indian-ness” is by smashing commonly held Western stereotypes of the Chinese in the representation of West Indian Chinese. In a sense, these unusual depictions of the Chinese are built on an idea that can be summed up as: “we have our own, uniquely different Chinese in the West Indies”. Much of the humour in Selvon’s texts lies in their disruption of more traditional images of the Chinese. For example, Selvon’s depiction of Berta is a direct rewriting of the stereotype of the docile, submissive and virginal Chinese female. Berta is domineering, initially refusing to work for or sleep with Otto, is reputed to have been a prostitute in the city, and engages in an affair with one of the men in the village. She is never, as with so many other Chinese women, shown behind the counter (it is not clear whether or not Berta actually works at all) or mothering a brood of children.

The stereotype of the industrious Chinese businessman is also inverted in Selvon’s depiction of Otto. Otto actually appears briefly in *A Brighter Sun* where he is

---

Publishers, 1973), pp. 66 – 71. Further references to this story will be given after the quotation in the

memorable because of his extreme laziness and lack of ambition. When he reappears in *Turn Again Tiger*, Otto continues to exhibit laziness, going so far as to place his bed half-way into the shop so that he can sleep between serving customers and to decide to marry for the simple fact that he believes a wife will do all the work in the shop. Another stereotype disrupted in Otto's portrayal is that of the shrewd, cunning and sexually exploitative Chinese. Instead, Otto appears extremely simple, especially with regard to his relationship with Berta.

The stereotypical image of the bland, emotionless Chinese is also challenged in West Indian fiction. In 'The Village Shop', for example, Ma Moon Peng cries over the treatment that she receives from the villagers and Lee Wah buys the shop for sentimental reasons, while in 'Many Things', much of the beauty of the tale lies in the description of the couple's deep affection for each other. For example, Anthony describes Chin as kissing Mai Ling on the "petals of her eyes" and one of the very first English phrases that Chin learns is "love velly much" (Anthony, 'Many Things', p. 70). Such images suggest that the Chinese of the West Indies are molded by their West Indian experience such that they belong there, and no where else. They are, as Selvon describes Berta, different because they are "real Chinese creole" (Selvon, *Tiger*, p. 66).

Together, the images of the Chinese in these texts, so much in contrast with those of the Chinese as a marginal or alienated presence discussed earlier, provide a striking illustration of how stereotypes and other images are never truly fixed or immutable when used to create "space for a 'subject peoples'" (Bhabha, 'Other Question', p. 70). Rather, affected by social, political, economic and class pressures, representations of the Chinese are constructed and manipulated to meet the multiple

challenges involved in imagining West Indian nationhood. In particular, they are used to manage one of the most vexing issues of establishing viable nationhood, namely, the attraction and rejection of setting the boundaries of national identity around exclusive ethnic markers by justifying nationhood on the grounds that the West Indies is a cultural space unique from any other in the world despite the lack of ethnic commonality. "Chineseness" is, therefore, embraced in fiction as a means of signifying a shared space of cultural exchange that results in a distinctive and accessible cultural heterogeneity that is at the heart of the nation. In other words, depictions of the Chinese making an impact on the West Indies confirm the claim of a uniquely fluid and inclusive West Indian identity. Similarly, portraying the Chinese as being changed by their West Indian experience, of accommodating to West Indian norms and mores, is an important means of proving that specifically West Indian experience, norms and mores actually do exist.

## **Conclusion**

Because they are part of a representational strategy that shifts to meet the changing needs and expectations of West Indian nationhood, the images of the Chinese that appear in West Indian fiction are ambiguous; one is never quite sure exactly where the Chinese stand in relation to West Indian community in terms of their representation. Bhabha might argue that this ambivalence is related to the double-time of nation, that is the tension between the pedagogical and performative aspects of nationhood. I would extend this argument slightly to recognise that rather than just double-time, the ambiguity of Chinese representations reflects the double-space of nation as a discursive product. It is this unstable double-space within which the Chinese are positioned as both outsiders and insiders to the nation. In this sense, I



am drawing on Hall's argument of positional difference, namely: "Difference, like representation, is also a slippery, and therefore, contested concept. There is the 'difference' which makes a radical and unbridgeable separation: and there is a 'difference' which is positional, conditional and conjunctural . . ." <sup>189</sup>. Hall is arguing against the existence of an essential Black subject or an absolute definition of Blackness. Similarly, I am arguing against the idea that images of the Chinese in the West Indies are equally absolute. The imagined West Indies is a space within which both concepts of difference in relation to the Chinese are acted out, revealing the nation as a location of continual discursive negotiation. In this regard, the Chinese shop of West Indian fiction is a fitting symbol of this space of unstable and contesting discursive representations.

It is often argued that the Chinese shop and, more particularly the counter therein, represents a fundamental divide between Chinese and Black creoles within West Indian societies. Typical comments in this regard include the manner in which Victor Chang begins his conference paper "'Counter' Culture: The Chinese Shop in Jamaica". Chang declares that the shop counter is:

. . . emblematic of the relationship which developed between the Chinese and the black Creole population: it was the site of the first sustained encounter between the cultures, the locus of their accounting with each other and the source of the peculiar dependency and hostility that have marked that relationship. Here . . . that counter was a barrier that had to be negotiated. <sup>190</sup>

Rather than read the Chinese shop simply as a space of barriers and divisions, I am arguing that it is equally, or more important, to read the shop as a site of the complex level of encounters within West Indian space (as suggested in Chang's phrase "the

---

<sup>189</sup> Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, op. cit., pp. 223 – 227, p. 226.

peculiar dependence and hostility” of the Blacks and Chinese). Further, that it is this very complexity that is emblematic of West Indian space as a discursive construct.

On one hand, the Chinese shop is depicted as alien in the sense that it is the site where those identified as outsiders are located. Within the shop, for example, Chinese ethnic identifiers, like language, are as much on display as the shop goods. Thus, the shop is the site where difference is seen and where difference is given its contextual meaning. In this regard, the outsider status of the Chinese is based largely on an understood difference in economic power and interests between shopkeeper and customer – the division of the shop counter – and the perceived vulnerability of the villagers in relation to the Chinese. For example, in *The Pagoda*, Lowe recognises that it is at those points “when [the villagers’] lives hit rock bottom, they came waving their fist” (Powell, p. 39) Similarly, it is after the burning of his shop that Lowe realises that the shop counter had helped to mark him out as different and distanced from the community and their needs and desires. Thus, when he first socialises with the villagers on the other side of the counter in Miss Cora’s shop, he interprets the welcoming attitudes of the villagers in this way: “As if it was essential that there be no barriers between him and them. No shop counters . . . as if without the shop he had become one of them”; “. . . there was no counter between him and the men, no boundary . . . The piazza of Miss Cora’s shop had become the great stabilizer” (ibid., pp. 136 and 172)<sup>191</sup>.

---

<sup>190</sup> Victor Chang, “‘Counter Culture’: The Chinese Shop in Jamaica”, unpublished, presented at the Toronto Hakka Heritage & Culture Conference, York University, Toronto, Ontario, 29 & 30 December, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>191</sup> Similarly, following the party in *Turn Again Tiger* – the symbol of Tall Boy’s full acceptance into village space – Tall Boy, Tiger and Joe return to Tall Boy’s shop to continue the party. When Tall Boy goes behind the counter, his whole demeanour changes and he becomes a shopkeeper again, instead of a fellow reveller:

He switched on the lights and went behind the counter. Once there it was as if he had come into his element. His whole attitude changed, his voice took on a new note as he leaned over the counter and asked, ‘What you having?’ (p. 17).

On the other hand, the Chinese shop is also represented as an integral component of West Indian space. The plethora of Chinese shops scattered throughout West Indian literary texts attest to this fact<sup>192</sup>. Additionally, the shop is central to the lives of the community. Note, for example, the number of scenes that take place in Tall Boy's shop in 'Highway in the Sun'. On a very physical level, it is the space of nourishment, where food and provisions are had. But, it is also the site where, on a more figurative level, new and specifically West Indian forms of life are created and shared. It is, in this sense, West Indian space. In 'The Tenantry of Birds', for example, it is only in Mr. Chin's shop that Nolene feels that she belongs and is comfortable and confident enough to be herself: "... after a while she began to feel at ease in the warmth of the shop, in the way everybody knew everybody else and joked and chattered and hailed each other loudly. Under their attentions, their kindness ... she began to glow ... In the shop she felt happy as if there was nobody looking over her shoulder to see what she was doing" (Senior, 'Tenantry', p. 51). In *The Pagoda*, Lowe's shop is also represented as a shared space of public domain in which all members of the community come together, where ideas and issues are discussed, and village news disseminated. In particular, Lowe remembers that the shop was where protest groups were formed, where political ideas were developed, "the glassful of rum cocked in their hands and the heads close together" (Powell, p. 32)<sup>193</sup>. Like the school, the shop is very much the crucible for national visions and the womb of the

---

<sup>192</sup> It would be impossible to provide a comprehensive listing of the texts that make brief reference to Chinese shops, laundries, restaurants, tea rooms, cafés, ect. The following list of works is only included to give an idea of how embedded in the West Indian imagination is the presence of the Chinese: Michael Anthony, 'Drunkard of the River', *Best West Indian Stories*, op. cit., pp. 19–23; Alecia McKenzie, 'Pinkie', *Satellite City and Other Stories* op. cit., pp. 24–30; Monar Rooplall, 'That Woman', *Estate People* op cit., pp., 51–57; Samuel Selvon, 'Down the Main', *Ways of Sunlight* (Longman Caribbean Limited, 1973), pp. 38–49, 'Holiday in Five Rivers', *Ways of Sunlight* op. cit., pp. 50–58, and 'Wartime Activities', *Ways of Sunlight* op. cit., pp. 82–93.

<sup>193</sup> A similar depiction of shop space, this time owned by a Black creole, is provided in Earl Lovelace's, *The Wine of Astonishment* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, Caribbean Writers Series, 1986).



nation itself. The shop also facilitates life in the West Indies. For Lowe, not only does it provide him with employment, through the shop Lowe shares in the villagers' lives and takes a certain amount of responsibility for them and their fortunes. Through the shop, Lowe recognises, "somehow they had become his people" (ibid., p. 39). He had

. . . lived there side by side with them. When drought struck and the land couldn't bear, hadn't he fed them? There wasn't one funeral he had missed. He locked shop early and attended every wedding with a box of hard-dough bread and a carton of white rum underneath his arm. He knew every child by name. He knew who was carrying belly for who. He knew who had money in bank and who was working obeah for who. They left it all there in the shop under the spell of liquor. (ibid., p. 13)

It is no wonder then that Lowe's reconciliation with the villagers and his attempt to bring Omar into the community take place within a shop. The shop is the location and facilitator of West Indian community, as ambiguous as such community may be<sup>194</sup>.

The multi-layered, double-space of the Chinese shop is poignantly captured in the fire scene in *The Pagoda* when Lowe believes that ". . . these very same people had burned it down. These very same ones dousing . . . everybody was dousing nonetheless. For it was theirs too" (ibid., p. 14). The Chinese shop is, thus, a site of exclusion and inclusion, suspicion and trust, hostility and camaraderie, reflecting the changing political and social climates of their communities in the same manner in which the ambiguous representations of the Chinese themselves express the unstable discursive needs of national fictions.

---

<sup>194</sup> A similar relationship between shopkeeper and community is suggested in 'Wing's Way'. Although the story for the most part focuses on the alienation that shopkeeper Wing feels in the village, the story reveals that Wing is not as distant from the villagers as he imagines himself to be. Early in the text, Wing comments on how the villagers seem to exist in an incestuously dependent relationship on each other. In many ways, his relationship to them is the same. The existence of his business and his very reason for being in the village depends on the continued support of the villagers, a fact given poignant demonstration when his friend, another shopkeeper, goes bankrupt after offending his customers. The villagers also depend on Wing in a very real and practical fashion. It is his shop where they purchase "the thousand other things that . . . helped to flesh out the lives of the villagers" (Woodroffe, p. 140). Most importantly, Wing's presence is perceived by the villagers to be "fixed" rather than alien. He is "commonplace in the consciousness of the people" (ibid., p. 139).

Representations of Chinese identity in the majority of twentieth century West Indian fiction are in accordance with the needs of resistance discourse to establish the boundaries of West Indian space, as ambivalent as these boundaries may be. The construction of the Chinese image is thus, for the most part, an imposed identity, or as Lowe realises with regard to his relationship with Miss Sylvie: "He didn't feel as if he had agency, as if he had voice" (ibid., p. 114). Chinese identities in West Indian texts are largely the outcome of "discursive fantasies" designed to meet the specific needs of those who speak them into being. The question of who is telling the story or creating the image is therefore vitally important to understanding the manner in which the Chinese have been represented. As such, the images of the Chinese examined so far are essentially one-sided and incomplete.

In *The Pagoda*, such limitations, with regard to representation are recognised when Lowe comes upon a box of Dulcie's correspondence. They are difficult to read since the handwriting is illegible and fading, and the sheets are decayed and out of order. Lowe realises that he is constructing his own image of Dulcie and her life and wonders: " . . . was this how things got set down, by people misreading and misinterpreting? . . . Was that how they made history?" (ibid., p. 213). This is the question that is always hovering in the background when examining images of the Chinese in the West Indies. How much of the identities created for them have been the result of "misreading and misinterpreting"? How much of what we "know" about the Chinese is only fantasy? The answers to such questions will never be absolute; however, they can be fleshed out by examining the depictions of the Chinese that they themselves construct. It is from this position, where truths are spoken "from the edges", that representations of the Chinese will be considered in the next chapter (ibid., p. 228).

## Chapter Five

### “From the Edges”: Literary Self-Representations

“. . . it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for me.”  
Frantz Fanon<sup>195</sup>

‘They see one part of me and they take that to be the whole me . . . Everybody is more than what they show.’  
Earl Lovelace<sup>196</sup>

‘. . . How you tell her a truth as that? How?’ ‘From the edges, sir.’  
Patricia Powell<sup>197</sup>

### Introduction

So far, this research has examined representations of the Chinese from external positions; that is, from discursive spaces outside the Chinese community. In this chapter, we move from these relative positions of power, in terms of articulating and disseminating images of the Chinese, to examine the unique possibilities and problems of self-representation for Chinese West Indians. In particular, I wish to address issues of “seeing” and “speaking”; namely, what pressures and tensions arise in the attempt to construct “a Self from pre-existing materials belonging to the Other”?<sup>198</sup> What are the implications of giving voice to the Chinese? And how, if at

---

<sup>195</sup> Frantz Fanon, ‘The Fact of Blackness’, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp. 109 – 140, p. 134. Further reference to this work will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>196</sup> Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon can’t Dance* (Essex: Longman Group Limited, Longman Caribbean Writers Series, 1985), pp. 225 – 226. Further reference to this novel will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>197</sup> Powell, p. 228.

<sup>198</sup> David Palumbo-Lui, ‘The Minority Self as Other: Problematics of Representation in Asian-American Literature’, *Cultural Critique*, 28 (1994), 75 – 102 (p. 77). Further references to this article will be given after quotation in the text.



all, does this Self accommodate to or contest previous understandings of nation and belonging?

## Constructing a “Minority Self”: Problems and Potential

In ‘The Fact of Blackness’, Fanon argues that African features – “Blackness” – are never mere physical fact. Instead, they are visual codes, carrying pre-set meanings that define how those who bear them are to conduct themselves, to perceive the world around them, and, in turn, how the world reacts to them. Blackness is therefore both a physical reality and the necessary condition to an identity (that is, a space of belonging) that is woven “out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories” by a White Other (Fanon, ‘Fact of Blackness’, p. 111). It is a rigid, limited, externally imposed identity that essentially expresses a perceived or desired relationship between Blacks and Whites; or as Fanon succinctly puts it: “. . . not only must the black man be black, he must be black in relation to the white man” (ibid. p. 110).

Fanon argues that the successful imposition of this Black identity lies partially in the fact that it is “triggered” by an obvious visual stimulus – Blackness. Thus, in his illustration of the White Parisian child encountering a Black man, the moment of identification – “look mother, a Negro” – is also the moment when the Black identity is “enacted”<sup>199</sup>. The instantaneous recognition caused by Blackness permits the immediate silencing of those voices or behaviours that do not correspond to the meaning given to Blackness. Thus, in Fanon’s example, when he calls out a greeting to the world, that is, expresses himself in his own voice and terms, his greeting is

---

<sup>199</sup> In contrast, Fanon argues that less visible identities, like “Jewishness”, do not have the same power since they can lack the immediacy of recognition that the external stimulus of Blackness provides.

immediately rejected – “I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged”, “. . . to behave like a black man” (ibid., pp. 115 and 114).

Fanon’s argument has significant implications for the investigation of self-representations by Chinese West Indians. As with Blackness, “Chineseness” can “be seen”. What effect does this reality have on the self-depiction? To paraphrase Fanon, does “the fact of Chineseness” mean that the Chinese cannot make meaning for themselves in terms of establishing belonging in the West Indies; that the meaning of “Chinese” is already there, pre-existing, waiting for them? Or, are these self-representations new and insistent voices, revealing “new truths”, regardless of the effect they might have on previous constructions of “nation”, “belonging” or even “Chinese” themselves? And how do these representations affect the “seeing” of “Chineseness”?

This question of “being seen”, is the central concern of Earl Lovelace’s novel, *The Dragon Can’t Dance*, even though the novel does not deal directly with Chinese West Indian experience. The novel posits that “being seen” is a precondition to valid membership and participation in the national community. This struggle for recognition is carried out on at least two levels. The first is the resistance of the Calvary Hill residents, a Trinidadian barrack-yard society, to marginalisation on a national scope. The Dragon’s dance at Carnival is supposed to be the symbolic manifestation of their rage and rebellion against a world that, because of their poverty, denies them their humanity – refuses to see them – and renders them unimportant to the national vision. On a smaller scale, a similar struggle is being carried out within Calvary Hill in the experience of the Indian character Pariag. Pariag’s relationship with his community explores the limitations and the creativity involved in the struggle for representation of a “minority Self”.

Pariag comes to the city because he has a burning desire “to be part of something bigger”, “ . . . a world where people could see him” (Lovelace, *The Dragon*, pp. 91 and 92). Such participation, however, must begin with recognition on the part of the dominant Other. In this case, seeing is belonging. Thus, when no one visits Pariag and his wife on Christmas day, Pariag concludes that it is because “They not *seeing* me, that is what it is” (ibid., p. 105). This experience highlights one of the important aspects of Chinese representation, namely a certain level of invisibility allotted to them in West Indian national spaces. As previous chapters have demonstrated, if they appear at all, Chinese characters in West Indian fiction consistently play minor roles, having little impact on the action of the story. Such representation is a subtle means of designating the Chinese as outsiders to nation space. Writing by Chinese West Indians provides an opportunity to challenge constructions of West Indian nationhood that marginalise the Chinese by increasing the awareness of their presence – by making them seen.

Marginalisation, however, as discussed previously, is not simply a matter of invisibility. Outsider status can be actively produced. For this to occur, the outsider must be seen and, more importantly, seen to be an outsider. For Pariag, “being seen” as an outsider is accomplished largely in two ways. The first is by reducing his identity to limited roles and allowing correspondingly limited spaces of interaction between him and his community. The most obvious examples of this are the occupational identities he is afforded. He is generally addressed in terms of his current job – “Bottles” when he is employed as a bottle collector, and “Channa Boy” when he sells snacks at the playing field. By the novel’s conclusion, Pariag has assumed another limited identity that has particular implications for the depiction of Chinese West Indians, namely, “the shopkeeper”. He expresses his frustration over the



constraints that this role affords him when he complains, "shop don't make a man" (ibid., p. 221). Yet, for the other members of the community, it is exactly this that defines who he is and his position within the community; or as Pariag himself realises: "They see one part of me and they take that to be the whole me" (ibid., p. 225).

The second manner in which Pariag is both seen and seen as an outsider occurs when the community identifies him as a threat to their ambitions. This is particularly evident in Pariag's most spectacular failed attempt at integration: the purchase of a bike. Pariag buys the bike specifically with the hope that "everybody, on Alice Street, on Calvary Hill, maybe even people of Port of Spain, would see him"; and see him, they do (ibid., p. 106). But not in the way that Pariag desires. Instead of being a means of acceptance, Pariag's ownership of the bike not only draws attention to him, it identifies him as an enemy and is interpreted as an aggressive act: "Just now he will be buying a car, and after that a shop . . . Just now he will own this whole street" (ibid., p. 122).

Buying the bike is Pariag's only real attempt to define space for himself within the community. Indeed, on his first bike ride, he actually renames himself the "Crazy Indian" and demonstrates some resistance to Fisheye's regular extortion, at least partially because Fisheye has called him "Channa Boy". Yet, like Fanon's rejected greeting, Pariag's act of self-representation is denied because the possibilities of his relationship to the Calvary Hill residents has been circumscribed by the dominant Others.

The bike incident reveals that, in his quest to be seen as belonging, Pariag is essentially confronted with a question of method: that is, how best to contest the well-established image of himself as outsider? Or as Pariag asks, ". . . how do you make

someone know you who know you too long and don't know you at all?" (ibid., p. 226). The novel offers two possibilities. The first is to seek a new type of invisibility such as that pursued by Balliram. Balliram seeks acceptance into creole space by erasing all that makes him different from Black creole Trinidadians. This same type of invisibility is afforded Pariag at the only moment when he is accepted in Calvary Hill – the destruction of the bike. He is seen as belonging to a space of shared suffering; or as his neighbours put it during his wife's labor: "All o' we is one. We have the same pains – Indian, Chinee, white, black, rich, poor. All o' we is one" (ibid., p. 163). Such invisibility, however, provides no challenge to the construction of West Indian nationhood as Black creole space; rather, it reinscribes such an image, confirms the authority of the Black creole voice and the peripheral positioning of other experiences.

Pariag rejects both this invisibility and the marginal status placed upon him and pursues another option. He re-imagines Trinidad as a space where difference can be seen, accommodated and celebrated such that boundaries of belonging are expanded and self-representation is opened up to vast possibilities. He couches this vision in the image of his community as a steelband:

*I wish I had choose myself to represent myself. I wish I had come with me, my own spirit and soul and grief and love and say, Look me! Look me! . . . I wish I did walk with a flute or a sitar, and walk in right there in the middle of the steelband yard where they were making new drums, new sounds, a new music from rubbish tins and bits of steel and oil drums, bending the iron over fire, chiselling out new notes. New notes. I wish I woulda go in there where they was making their life anew in fire, with chisel and hammer, and sit down with my sitar on my knee and say: Fellars, this is me Pariag from New Lands. Gimme the key! Give me the Do Re Mi. Run over the scale. Leh We Fa Sol La! Gimme the beat, lemme beat! Listen to these strings. And let his music cry too, and join in the crying. Let it scream too . . . *We didn't have to melt into one. I woulda be me for my own self. A beginning. A self to go in the world with, with something in my hands to give. We didn't have to melt into one. They woulda see me.* (ibid., p. 224, emphasis added).*

Significantly, Pariag's vision is never realised. As such, it raises the obvious question: can the minority Self truly ever appropriate and reinscribe its image? In a sense, it is the same issue that Gayatri Spivak addressed when she famously asked, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'<sup>200</sup> Of course, there are significant differences between Spivak's concerns and those of this chapter. Spivak was questioning whether it is possible for post-colonial criticism to actually accomplish its stated aim of creating space for the colonized without becoming implicated in the imperial enterprise. Nevertheless, her concerns raise issues important to the exploration of Chinese self-representations. In particular, Spivak identifies two inherent dangers of post-colonial criticism that are also relevant to this chapter: first, the possibility of reinscribing positions of subordination and domination; and second, the possibility of "essentialising" images of the Self.

These then are the issues that will be explored in the remainder of this chapter. Clearly, I am seeking to go beyond merely identifying racist stereotypes or suggesting that representations of the minority Self are unproblematic inverse images of such stereotypes. Neither do I intend to merely argue that such depictions somehow provide "truer" or more valid images of the Chinese and their relationships with other members of West Indian communities. Rather, I want to explore how ideas of identity and community become unstable sites of chaos and creativity when examined from "the other side of the counter", and argue that this ambiguous articulation of identity contributes to a flexible understanding of "being Chinese" and "being West Indian".

The images of the Chinese explored in these texts will be examined loosely along the options available to Pariag. In other words, I will be exploring distanced or



alienated images of the Chinese, as well as images that depict Chinese integration into West Indian space. In this regard, I am particularly interested in the terms of such belonging, including whether or not it is predicated on invisibility. Finally, I will investigate how some images actually contest the boundaries of "nation" and, more radically, "Chinese", and seek to understand "belonging" and "Chinese" as dynamic, unstable and heterogeneous categories.

Before this investigation can get underway, however, it is necessary to note the relative paucity of texts available to this study. There are very few authors of Chinese West Indian descent publishing. To further compound this difficulty, those who are writing, are not necessarily concerned with "Chineseness" or with interrogating representations of Chinese West Indians. Perhaps most noticeable in this regard is the work of Willi Chen. Chen's collection of short stories, *King of the Carnival*, has no major Chinese character, unless the unnamed narrator of 'Ceasar', who seems to be a veiled autobiographical character, is included<sup>201</sup>. Similarly, only two of Meiling Jin's short stories in her collection *Song of the Boatwoman* explore West Indian space from a Chinese perspective<sup>202</sup>.

It is difficult to account for this seeming lack of interest in expressing Chinese West Indian voices and visions. Chen suggests that his writing is heavily affected by the very real fact that Indians and Blacks dominate Trinidad's population. He claims

---

<sup>200</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1988), pp. 271 – 313.

<sup>201</sup> Willi Chen, *King of the Carnival and Other Stories*, (London: Hansib Publishing Limited, 1988). 'Ceasar' on pp. 123 – 142. Further references to this collection will be given after quotation in the text. Chen has also indicated that his as yet unpublished second collection of stories will continue to focus on Indo-Trinidadian experience (Conversation with Willi Chen, Coventry, UK (by telephone), 30 July 2002).

<sup>202</sup> Meiling Jin, *Song of the Boatwoman* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press Ltd., 1996). Further references to this collection will be given after quotation in the text.

that their overwhelming presence could not help but influence his writing<sup>203</sup>. Chen has claimed that his writing simply reflects the reality that Indians and Blacks dominate Trinidad's population. Easton Lee provides different reasons for Chinese West Indians' literary "silence"<sup>204</sup>. First, he notes there is the language issue. English was not the first language or necessarily a comfortable mode of expression for many Chinese West Indians. Anything written in Chinese, however, was largely inaccessible to an English-reading public<sup>205</sup>. Second, Lee suggests that the Chinese were "made to feel ashamed" – as if there was something "wrong" with those aspects of their culture and experience that differed from the dominant Black creole culture. This created some reservation about putting their lives and thoughts on display in published fiction. This second factor ties in with Lee's final explanation for the lack of Chinese West Indian authors, namely that members of the Chinese community might not believe that outsiders might actually be interested in what they have to say. He points to the success of Asian authors elsewhere, such as Amy Tan's impressive success in the United States, as grounds for his belief that in the near future there will be more Chinese West Indians writing about and interrogating their experiences in fiction<sup>206</sup>.

---

<sup>203</sup> E-mail from Willi Chen to Anne-Marie Lee-Loy, 3 August 2002. In an interview with Stewart Brown ('Stewart Brown Interviews Willi Chen, Author of *The King of the Carnival* (Hansib, 1988)', *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 5(1&2) (1992), 106 – 112), Chen also suggested that he does not write about Chinese West Indian experience because the older Chinese whom he would like to interview before trying to imaginatively produce their experiences have already died off or become senile. He does not seem to consider drawing on his own experience as a particularly valid expression of Chinese West Indian experience

<sup>204</sup> Conversation with Easton Lee, Kingston, Jamaica, 12 July 2002.

<sup>205</sup> See Appendix E, p. ix.

<sup>206</sup> At the time of this writing, Lee was working on a collection of short stories that he hopes to publish between 2003 and 2005 and was tentatively planning to write a novel some time later (Conversation with Easton Lee, Kingston, Jamaica 12 July 2002). Victor Chang (Conversation with Victor Chang, Kingston, Jamaica, 12 July 2002) and Janice Lo Shinebourne are also working on short story collections. Shinebourne is also completing a third novel. In a brief phone conversation (Conversation with Willi Chen, Coventry, UK, 30 July 2002), Willi Chen indicated that he is

David Palumbo-Liu has argued that Asian-American self-representation in literature is problematic because the minority Self is unable to truly appropriate the symbolic codes of the White Other due to "the overwhelming cultural authority of the Other" (Palumbo-Liu, p. 88). He maintains that the White Other intervenes into Asian-American self-representations because it allows "only certain self-representing signifiers to the minority individual, [and] mediates any coming-into-Being in representation" (ibid., p. 90). As a result, the Asian American minority Self is "doubly inscribed in the paradigm of observer/observed object, for he observes a representation of himself" (ibid., p. 98). To some degree, such a situation is also evident in Chinese West Indian writing, particularly in the tendency to reproduce the image of a distanced and disengaged Chinese shopkeeper. In 'Light in the Shop', for example, Chang describes a vast abyss between the customers and his shopkeeper brother. He uses language that conforms to stereotype when he describes his brother as "curiously insulated from the life that enters his shop"; as being "in an alien land amid alien people"; and as remaining "curiously detached from the society surrounding" him (Chang, 'Light', p. 105). Lee marks out a similar space of distance in the poem 'Saturday'<sup>208</sup>, where the shop counter so divides the shopkeeper from his community that all the vibrant experiences detailed in the poem take place beyond the shop counter; in fact, entirely outside of the shop. So far removed is the shopkeeper from this life that he neither takes part in the conversation nor is considered a worthy subject of gossip.

---

considering writing a new collection of fiction in which he intends to focus on the creation of Chinese characters (however, Chen made the same promise in an interview with Stewart Brown in 1992).

<sup>207</sup> "Now it settled into him, this sense of loss and aloneness, as a pain no one knew of", Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can't Dance*, p. 220.



Chen is perhaps less consciously reflective of his reinscription of alien status for the Chinese. In an interview with Stewart Brown, for example, Chen defines "Trinidad life" as "the Negro life, the Indian life, the peasant life" and the "average Trinidadian" as "the Negro or the Indian" ('Interview', p. 107). Although Chen is speaking about the numeric dominance of these two groups in the general population, his definitions effectively position him and other Chinese outside the term "Trinidadian". Such positioning is also apparent when Chen, recounting his childhood, remembers how funeral processions would pass his parents' shop. As a sign of respect, his family would close the shop's doors. At that point, Chen recalls, he "used to go and hide and look" at the funeral proceedings (ibid., p. 111). In this description, Chen and his family literally become mere observers to village events rather than participants. In a similar fashion, the Chinese characters in Chen's fiction remain predominantly shopkeepers who have little involvement in the goings-on of their communities<sup>209</sup>.

Also commonly reinscribed is the image of the shop as a hostile space. Chen remembers that as a child he was only occasionally bullied, but that "in the shop that sort of hostility was there every day. They always cried down the Chinese . . . There was this hostile thing that was a resentment of us coming" ('Interview', p. 108). Chang also envisions the encounter at the counter as a clash of hostilities when he describes the interaction between his brother and his customers:

---

<sup>208</sup> Easton Lee, 'Saturday', *From Behind the Counter. Poems from a Rural Jamaican Experience*, (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers), p. 3. Further references from this collection will be given after quotation in the text.

<sup>209</sup> Chinese shopkeepers appear in Chen's stories 'Lalloo's Wrath', 'No Pork, Cheese', 'Trotters' and 'Assam's Iron Chest', *King of the Carnival*, op. cit., pp. 37 – 43, 51 – 57, 117 – 122 and 60 – 63. Except for the latter story, they all hold minor roles. Only in 'Ceasar' do Chinese characters appear outside of the shop (the narrator's name is "Willi Chen", and he meets Mark at a party where Choy is playing the bongo); but even in this story, the Chinese character is limited to an observer role. Perhaps not coincidentally, Chen's shopkeepers also display stereotypical traits. The shopkeepers in 'No Pork, Cheese' and 'Assam's Iron Chest', for example, all speak a type of pidgin English while

He allows the imitation pidgin to wash over him, the frequent coarse and vulgar Jamaican expressions do not shock or stun him because he remains uninformed about them, though he can tell from the tones of the speaker that what is being said is not complimentary . . . I find my hackles rising, hearing the insults and the naked aggression . . . (Chang, 'Light', p. 105)

The level of antagonism that Chen and Chang depict is, to a large degree, missing in Lee's representation of shop life<sup>210</sup>. In 'Saturday' for example, the shopkeeper's exclusion from village life is not malicious. Nevertheless, small details in Lee's work, such as those in the poem 'Today'<sup>211</sup>, indicate a certain power struggle in the relationship between the Chinese shopkeeper and the villagers. In 'Today', the shopkeeper encourages his child's educational pursuits because "learning and money – [are] real power" (ibid.). The poem portrays the Chinese as somewhat vulnerable and powerless against their Black neighbours; yet it also hinges on a future reversal of such positions: "Today dem laugh./ One day you kick backside/ and pay with pocket change/ still have plenty money aside –/ I tell you no body laugh you/ that time you laugh sweet" (ibid.). 'Today' also distances Chinese space from West Indian space through a division of values: the villagers apparently live for the pleasures of the moment; the Chinese, on the other hand, "know better" (ibid.).

Despite such images of mutual antipathy, overall, Chinese West Indian authors imagine shop space as an environment in which hostility towards the Chinese is never entirely settled; or as Chang recognises, "it was never a simple or straightforward relationship and it ranged from mutual trust to open antagonism and hostility" (Chang, "'Counter' Culture", p. 2). Such hostility is particularly destabilised by the

---

Assam corresponds to the image of the cunning, thieving Chinese shopkeeper in the fraudulent manner that he obtains the insurance money.

<sup>210</sup> In spite of Chen's memory of hostility in the shop, it must be noted that his fiction does not reflect such antagonism. This may be, however, due to the limited interactions he portrays between the shopkeeper and his customers.

<sup>211</sup> Lee, 'Today', *From Behind the Counter*, op. cit., p. 7.

practice of granting credit to customers – significantly referred to as “trusting” goods. Indeed, Chang concludes that the relationship between Chinese shopkeeper and creole customer was paradoxically one of “contestation and dependence”<sup>212</sup>. In this regard, it is no surprise that in ‘Light and the Shop’, the image of the antagonistic shop space is disrupted by recounting the incident in which his brother willingly trusts goods to a new customer.

The ambiguous nature of the shopkeeper-villager relationship is also captured for humorous effect in Lee’s poem ‘One Day’<sup>213</sup>. It is written in the voice of a creole customer ordering groceries at the same time that s/he insults the person behind the counter: “Like you no have no sense”; “Hurry up no roun face chinee bwoy”; “ugly squeeze eye bwoy” (ibid.). Before leaving, however, the customer has a sudden change of tone when it becomes evident that the purchases will not hold in the basket, addressing the shopkeeper with the words, “beg you a paper bag no me nice fren . . .” (ibid.). This small exchange subtly and humorously captures how positions of friend and foe are constantly renegotiated in the shop.

More radical, however, is the reinscription of the Chinese shop as a space of oppression for the Chinese. Not only does such an image reinforce the idea of the shopkeeper as alienated from that which is without (that is, creole space), it also portrays the Chinese shopkeeper as being alienated from that which is within – the shop. In fact, the shop becomes a monstrous entity unto itself, both prison and prisoner, slave-driver and field of labour for the shopkeeper and his family. Take for example, ‘Friday’<sup>214</sup> in which the narrator’s ability to participate in village life is severely hampered by shop responsibilities: “all over the school yard/ children play and run/ chevvvy chase, rounders/ egg and spoon,/ flat race and cricket./ But I must be

---

<sup>212</sup> Conversation with Victor Chang, Kingston, Jamaica, 12 July 2002.



home to take my place/ behind the counter” (ibid.). ‘All Week’<sup>215</sup> depicts similar resentment:

Picnic and garden party  
School concert  
Church concert  
Cricket match –  
You watch only from behind  
The counter – . . .  
No bird bush  
Nor wheel  
Nor race  
Nor cart  
Nor swimming in the river  
No moonlight walk  
Only hear your  
Friends talk  
And they laugh  
Because you ‘born and grow’  
Behind the counter. (ibid.)

Chang provides a remarkably similar vision of the shop when he remembers “we lost out on many a class outing and weekend party; not for us the thrill of a trip to the Peak or to Castleton Gardens, no scout or cadet camps or hiking” (Chang, ‘Light’, p. 104).

Not only is the shop a place without privilege, it is explicitly designated as a space of disempowerment for the shopkeeper. On one level, the shopkeeper is at the mercy of the customer. In ‘Friday’, for example, the shopkeeper must maintain a welcoming smile throughout a barrage of customer insults, while in ‘Light in the Shop’, the shopkeeper cannot respond to insults because he cannot afford to lose his customers. On yet another level, the shopkeepers are also subject to workings of a capitalist enterprise, including the tyranny of profit. Recalling his childhood, Chang writes that “. . . from early days we were made to understand that every sweet, every

---

<sup>213</sup> Lee, ‘One Day’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 9.

<sup>214</sup> Lee, ‘Friday’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> Lee, ‘All Week’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 11.

mouthful meant profit lost and so *we were not free* to indulge ourselves”(ibid., p. 104, emphasis added). The shopkeeper’s son in ‘Some Days’ is made aware of the same situation when his father declares: “Money in till look fat/ belong to merchant in town/ member that”<sup>216</sup>.

Shop space becomes a parallel of slave space in terms of endless drudgery and in this way, provides added complexity to the image of West Indian space as a space of suffering. The names of Lee’s poems, such as ‘Everyday’, ‘All Week’, and those named after days in the week, establish a sense of inescapable, monotonous toil: “wash face – / make haste – / open shop – / watch shop – / lock shop – / sweep shop – / keep shop – / . . .shop-work it can’t done/ for it start all over again/ fore-day morning”; “Every morning same time same place/ same ting – / two side a counter./ Like sunrise/ like moon shine/ like sunset”<sup>217</sup>. Even night does not free the shopkeeper from the shop’s oppression for it is then that preparations must be made for the next day’s labour. So inescapable is the shop that it follows the shopkeeper to bed in the scents lingering on his person or invading the very world of his dreams: “. . . brown paper packages/ swim and dance all night around in/ your head” and “You fall asleep/ counting not sheep/ but stacks of paper packages”<sup>218</sup>.

Like Lee, Chang represents the shop as a space of oppressive toil, rhetorically asking, “Is it any wonder that we all hated the shop and fled from it as soon as we could?” (Chang, ‘Light’, p. 104) For Chang, the overriding image of the shop is, in fact, a prison. He ends ‘Light in the Shop’ with this scene of the shopkeeper’s quarters in the back of the shop: “a fortress – the old iron bed barricaded on three sides by ramparts of boxes of Betty and Nestlé condensed milk, Grace tinned corn and peas”

---

<sup>216</sup> Lee, ‘Some Days’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 10.

<sup>217</sup> Lee, ‘Next Day’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 8; ‘Every Day’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 6.

<sup>218</sup> Lee, ‘Some Nights’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 13.

(ibid., p. 108). It is no surprise then, that for Chang, quitting the grocery trade is considered acquiring freedom.

Through such images, Chinese West Indians re-imagine shop space such that it is no longer a place of luxury and privilege, as was passionately imagined by Meredith in *Guerrillas* (see Meredith's speech in chapter four). Instead, the shop is redefined as prison space, confined, restricted and joyless. Life beyond the counter becomes the space of possibility and freedom. The image of the alienated shopkeeper is also re-examined to suggest that spectator status is neither desired nor sought by Chinese West Indians. Nevertheless, such images do not provide a revolutionary challenge to the discursive framework that represents the Chinese as alien to West Indian space. They remain imagined as distanced, regardless of their desire to overcome such distance and participate more fully – that is, “to belong” – in creole space. Indeed, they become doubly alienated, both within and without the shop.

### “Part of This Living”<sup>219</sup>

The options available to facilitate Pariag becoming “part of this . . . living” (ibid.), that is, to be seen as belonging in West Indian space, are also available to Chinese West Indian authors' representations of Chinese characters: invisibility, caused by obliterating ethnic difference, or an expansion of the definition of “West Indian”, whether Jamaican, Trinidadian or Guianese, to accommodate such difference. Clearly, there is a strong pressure on Chinese West Indians to claim belonging on the basis of a certain amount of invisibility as defined above. Chen's assertion that is he is “*really* a Trinidadian” for example, is grounded on the fact that he grew up among Blacks and Indians and claims familiarity with their troubles



(‘Interview’, p. 108)<sup>220</sup>. In a similar fashion, Chang asserts that he and his siblings are “more Jamaican” than his parents or his brother who was raised in China, because their lifestyles were more heavily influenced by their Black creole nursemaid, and, for Chang in particular, because of his loss of Hakka during his teenage years. Their comments suggest an understanding of West Indian space as excluding a Chinese presence. “Chineseness” becomes marginal and inauthentic in terms of “being West Indian”; thus participation in West Indian space in the sense of both “being seen” and “being seen as belonging” must involve an erasure of “Chineseness”. Meiling Jin’s short story ‘Victoria’ and Janice Lo Shinebourne’s two novels, *Timepiece* and *The Last English Plantation* also imagine a certain invisibility for their characters in establishing them as belonging to West Indian space; however, there is a significant difference in their work: neither author imagines West Indian space as ethnic space – as “Black space” or “Indian space”<sup>221</sup>. Instead, the boundaries of belonging are established as shared experiences, values and ambitions. It is in this sense that “Chineseness” becomes irrelevant and therefore invisible.

The creation of community and spaces of belonging is particularly important in the work of Shinebourne and Jin because, even though they take place in different time periods, all three stories are set in contexts of transition when “Everything was yet without substance” (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 78). Both authors imagine Guyana as having once consisted of two spaces of belonging: urban and rural. The stories take place, however, in times of a growing ascendancy of urban space; that is,

---

<sup>219</sup> “Pariag wished he could become part of this, this living”, Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can’t Dance*, p. 99.

<sup>220</sup> Ironically, it is a statement that reaffirms his earlier definitions of Trinidadian space as Indian and Black, and has the paradoxical effect of marking him an “outsider” (he cannot be a “real” Trinidadian) at the same time that it validates his claim to insider status.

<sup>221</sup> Meiling Jin, ‘Victoria’, *Song of the Boatwoman*, op. cit., pp. 7 – 22; Shinebourne, *The Last English Plantation* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1988); *Timepiece* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, [n.d.]). Further references to these works will be given after quotation in the text.

the values, attitudes and ways of living (and marking out belonging) as they have been defined in urban space are slowly invading rural space as old ways of living in the country collapse. Their stories explore not only the disintegration of old ways of living, but examine the ways in which new spaces of belonging were being constructed.

The importance of shared historical experiences as a means of establishing belonging is asserted early in Shinebourne and Jin's work. Indeed, one of the themes running through both Shinebourne's novels is that spaces of community disintegrate when the past is forgotten. Thus, Georgetown is imagined as a site of constant conflict that is so fragmented that it contains only individuals rather than communities; or as Sandra puts it: "People live as if they have no past" (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 153). In contrast, in her home village, even though the old ways of understanding community are being eroded, "you could not forget the past, could not escape from it"; "So close was the past here, it was as if the landscape wore many masks and the spirits of the past still lived here . . . " (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, pp. 26 and 55). This sense of past is represented in a similar fashion in *The Last English Plantation*. Here, it is even more evident that one's connection to one's past is a means of situating oneself, of knowing where one belongs, regardless of changes. Thus, Nani reacts to June's distress over her school experience by commenting that Lucille had not said a mantra for June before she started school. Nani proceeds to do so – and the mantra turns out to be a retelling of June's family history. Even the memory of the race riots and violence of 1960s Guyana are deemed as a missed opportunity to establish community. In particular, in *Timepiece* Son suggests that such a memory would create community if only by drawing people together with the common aim of preventing such atrocities from happening again: "I don' know why they don' have a

Remembrance Day for all the people that get killed in Georgetown and Wismar, when we observe a minute silence. It would do this country good to remember" (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 79).

In 'Victoria', a recognition of shared history is also an important means of establishing Chinese belonging in Guyana. 'Victoria' begins with the question, "What was a nice Chiney girl doing with a name like Victoria?" The response comes in the subsequent line: "It was still the days of Empire, that is why. They call she Victoria in honour of that fat English Queen that once ruled the waves" (Jin, 'Victoria', p. 7). Thus, the story's imaginative space is established within the context of West Indian colonialism; and by branding the name of one of the most famous representatives of English colonialism on her Chinese Guianese heroine, Jin represents the Chinese as members of that space. The family's indentured labour history also establishes their belonging in terms of common suffering. It is the same device that Shinebourne uses in *The Last English Plantation* when Cyrus must defend himself against Boysie's accusation that he is aligning himself with Overseer Beardsley and, as such, no longer belongs in the community. Cyrus' defence is to recount his father's experiences as an estate labourer. This history validates his place within the boundaries of rural community space. Jin is even more effective in embedding her Chinese within Guyanese space when describing the casual brutality enacted against Victoria's grandfather and fellow Chinese immigrants. Jin writes, "That is why you get the saying, a Chinee is a Chinee, just shoot any damn goobi" (Jin, 'Victoria', p. 1). By doing so, Jin depicts Chinese "belonging" as a *fait accompli*: the local idioms have included the Chinese at the same time as they recognise the historical justification for this inclusion.



Shared histories are not, however, enough to establish belonging. Belonging finds its truest expression in everyday shared experiences, such as a common struggle for survival. For both Jin and Shinebourne, the Chinese shop is imagined as a key component in this struggle for survival. Shop life and village life is intrinsically intertwined. Neither Wong nor Ben treats their shops as mere business. Their willingness to continue to extend credit to the villagers even though it is obvious they can no longer pay their bills, demonstrates that both men see the shop as an integral component of their communities' struggle to survive; or as Wong puts it succinctly when Victoria complains that they can no longer afford to give credit, "A man got to feed he family" (Jin, *Victoria*, p. 11). Indeed, Wong's and Ben's shops fail specifically because they are so tied up with the lives of the villagers.

It is, however, another small, but powerful statement by Jin that provides the best image of the coterminous existence of shop and village. In describing a payout on the estate, Jin writes, "There was one big grumbling on the estate, you had only to stand in the shop to hear it" (ibid., p. 10). From a very literal standpoint, such a statement simply means that the same complaints made on the estate are also made in the shop; but the structure of the phrase suggests a more figurative interpretation, which, in turn, provides a striking example of the interconnectedness of shop and village. If one needs only stand in the shop to hear the grumbling on the estate, then in a sense, the estate and the shop are the same space. Chinese space, that is, the shop, and creole space, the estate, thus collapse into one space.

Shared daily experiences as the basis of belonging is also an important theme in *The Last English Plantation*. Early in the novel, June remembers Old Dam in the following way:

Half the families in Old Dam had been African, living in cottages set a little way from the logies where Indian families lived. Yet they had lived like one large family in spite of their differences, the women sharing childminding and attending each other's birth, marriage and funeral rituals. They all, men and women, used to gossip and talk work and politics. She missed the feeling of belonging to that kind of village. (Shinebourne, *Last English*, p. 37)

. . . [It was] the closeness of people with the same struggles, trials and tribulations who did not just talk about them and listen sympathetically but did things together all the time – helping each other give birth, mind the old, bury the dead, care for the sick and contain the criminal elements. (ibid., pp. 100 – 101)

In New Dam, however, Lucille rejects this shared experience because it is tainted by the poverty she is trying so hard to escape. As a result, Lucille is constantly separating herself from the daily experiences of her neighbours: she insists on speaking English with an imitation British accent and refuses (or cannot) speak Hindi; she no longer spends Sundays cooking meals with the other village women for the men; and she sends June to highschool in the city (something that no other family from their immediate community seems to have been able to do). Lucille even insists that Cyrus move the new bathroom he is building because it is too close to the road and people in the community might use it. In the end, Lucille ends up essentially isolated, distanced from her husband, daughter and neighbours, the most extreme example of her alienation being the moment at Mariam's funeral when June realises that Lucille is "aloof from it . . . She was only here for manner's sake" (ibid., p. 150).

It is the same lack of common, everyday experiences that eventually separates June and Sandra from their childhood friends. As students in an urban highschool, their daily lives differ vastly from their mutual classmate, Ralph Brijall, for example, who has left school to work on the estate. Again, "Chineseness" as a means of marking out spaces of belonging for both girls is irrelevant. To this end, it is interesting to note that upon beginning highschool, June does not attempt to make

friends with any of the Chinese students. June feels no connection to them because they are clearly city people – they “looked at home here” (ibid., p. 61) – while June feels alienated in the urban space. She therefore initially seeks to find a place for herself in the student population by aligning herself with the rural children. Indeed, she has little alternative than to do so, since the city children, noting that she has brought her lunch in a saucepan typical of those used by rural labourers identify her as “Country Bacoo”, that is, as belonging to rural space. (ibid., p. 74)

‘Short Fuse’ provides another example of Chinese integration into West Indian space through shared experience, although this time, “West Indian space” is not so much the literal territory of Guyana, but rather, the emotional milieu of a West Indian migrant<sup>222</sup>. The sense of exile and alienation that Gladys feels as a result of the hostility directed towards her in her new British environment, most obviously represented by the aggressive neighbour dog, has nothing to do with her being Chinese and everything to do with her being an immigrant. Her description of her first experiences in England could apply to any West Indian immigrant, regardless of ethnic background:

From the first week in Inverness Terrace, when the landlady lifted the lids of her cooking pot to peer inside, Gladys was aware of hostility. She knew the look that said: no coloureds, no children, no animals, and bore each insult, each act of hostility as a mark of her exile. (Jin, “Short Fuse”, p. 89)

Indeed, so invisible is Gladys’ “Chineseness”, that if she did not eventually identify herself as Chinese, there would be no way for the reader to know she was; all of her cultural references, for example – the food she eats, her style of speaking – are drawn from a generic Guyanese creole matrix in which the presence of Chinese cultural

---

<sup>222</sup> Meiling Jin, ‘Short Fuse’, *Song of the Boatwoman* (Leeds: People Tree Press, 1996), pp. 7 – 22. Further references to this story will be given after quotations in the text.



traits seem to be invisible. More importantly, when Gladys dreams of home, she dreams of Guyana, not China. For Gladys, being an immigrant means that she is an outsider to England, and outsider space, is “coloured space”; and, it is in “coloured space”, not “Chinese space”, that Gladys finds belonging.

In *Timepiece*, other important spaces of belonging are available to the Chinese in which “Chineseness” as an identity is irrelevant. They are what could be called “communities of gender”. The characters in the novel divide themselves into gendered spaces defined by their experiences as men and women in Guyana such that nation space is also a site of conflict between the sexes. This division is most clearly explored in the depiction of Ben and Helen’s relationship with each other and with their friends.

Both are part of a tight circle of friends: “each group close, loyal and indivisible” (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 34). Of Ben and his friends, Shinebourne writes, “Their conversations were a reaffirmation of belonging to each other and their places of work and male authority” (ibid., p. 36). Sandra’s male colleagues are, in spite of their different political and economic positions, united in “the rudeness of being Guianese men together, the wrongness and the strongness of it all” (ibid., p. 74)<sup>223</sup>. Above all else, the men are united in their belief in their right to dominate their women; that is, of women having some type of secondary status to them. Thus, Ben responds to the idea of a girl running a country with scorn and his arguments with Helen routinely degenerate into his reminding her to “keep her place; her job was to keep the children fed and house clean, clothes washed and food cooked” (ibid., p. 37). Sandra experiences similar treatment from the men in her life. For example, men never want to allow her the last word in an argument or debate. Similarly, as a female

reporter, not only is she expected to cover events like beauty contests rather than political events, she is placed at a desk explicitly labelled "female reporter", as opposed to the regular desks, where the male reporters sit. In fact, when she writes a thoughtful, critical piece, her editor refuses to believe it is hers, convinced that something of that quality could only be written by a man.

What Sandra is experiencing is the "cross of her womanhood"<sup>224</sup>; and it is the creation of a space free from that cross which is the bond that holds her mother's group of friends together: "The women's talk too was a form of binding, but also a release from their confinement not only as plantation people but also as women at home" (ibid., p. 36)<sup>225</sup>. Their bond is their burden of womanhood and together they create a space of freedom for themselves where they can resist and rebel against the limitations of "wife", "mother" and "woman".

Although neither Helen nor Sandra feel anymore burdened as women because of their Chinese status, in general, representations of Chinese women are almost exaggerated versions of the burdens identified in *The Last English Plantation* and *Timepiece*. Representations of Chinese women in the West Indies can be basically summed up as follows: "Chiney girl work in shop/ save your money care you children/ take good care of husband"<sup>226</sup>. Nowhere is this stereotype more evident that

---

<sup>223</sup> In fact, what initially attracts Sandra to Son is "He did not want to contest a position with her . . . That he was a man unafraid of a woman – this was a stronger ground for trust. He did not depend on male group identity. His being was not in opposition" (pp. 146 – 147)

<sup>224</sup> Paul once tries to end an argument with Sandra by telling her, "You women don't understand these things", to which Sandra responds, "That's supposed to be my cross?" (ibid., p. 100).

<sup>225</sup> It is in *The Last English Plantation*, however, where Shinebourne sets out her most explicit statement of the burden of womanhood in Guyana. This occurs when Lucille accuses June of wanting to be a "coolie woman": "You want to be a coolie woman? Well be a coolie woman! I don't care! Coolie women have to carry all the burdens for the men, the burden of the sick, the old, the children, burying the dead, and get no thanks for it, only licks! And the women beat their daughters and treat them worse than the men treat them!" (p. 128)

<sup>226</sup> Lee, 'China Town Story', *Behind the Counter*, pp. 179 – 180, p. 180.

in Lee's elegy 'Women of Guangdong'<sup>227</sup>. Written as a tribute to Hakka women in the West Indies, Lee's poem provides a frightening vision of Chinese womanhood defined as endless toil:

... their life purpose being dutiful wife  
good wife  
working sun up to sundown  
and many hours in between  
in country-village city and town  
in the manner of honoured tradition  
chattel-like almost  
thrifty beyond imagination  
displaying little emotion  
every year  
bearing children  
feeding children  
caring children  
secretly weeping  
keeping shop  
non stop (ibid., p. 73)

It is an image that is contested in one of the most vibrant depictions of Chinese womanhood to appear in West Indian fiction, 'Victoria'.

Victoria smashes all ideas of the quiet, submissive Chinese woman fated to spend her life bearing children and working in shop. From the very beginning, Victoria enters the world with a scream that "broke the night – cut it in two and wake up the neighbours" (Jin, 'Victoria', p. 7). Her voice, shattering the image of the silent Chinese woman, alerts the reader to the fact that this is going to be a very different depiction of Chinese womanhood. Indeed Victoria's entire life resists the circumscribed role laid out for her by her gender and ethnicity. As a youngster, she is described as "full of fight and stubborn as a mule" and "no easy child. Right from the start she would cry for her own way and later she did often fight with her brother Eddie, bullying him . . ." (ibid., p. 8). Her father concludes that "She should have

---

<sup>227</sup> Lee, 'Women of Guangdong', *Heritage Call. Ballad for the Children of the Dragon*



been a boy because she had all the fight her brother Edward lacked, a kind of wildness that sat well in a boy but spelled trouble in a girl, especially one like Victoria" (ibid., p. 10).

As a young woman, Victoria rejects the typical role of submissive Chinese womanhood when her brother-in-law becomes sexually aggressive with her. Victoria refuses to accept this as her fate and promptly leaves the shop, neither cowed by guilt nor her father's scolding to return to the unpleasant situation. She also turns down a marriage proposal from the Fong boy, partly because Victoria does not believe that she needs a man to take care of her. Even the one incident in which she appears to conform to a more conventional female role, when she has her hair cut and permed, reveals itself to be yet another rebellion – this time against Esther's ideas of middle-class Christian womanhood. It is no wonder then, that Victoria appears most at ease when she runs into the sea, revelling in a space that is seemingly without limits. In this scene, Nettie provides a counter-image by remaining on the beach. Nettie's limited vision of womanhood and her acceptance of the burdens cast upon her in that role is symbolised by her nearsightedness and the cumbersome umbrella and mat that she lugs with her to the beach. Nettie's acceptance of Fong's proposal is the ultimate acceptance of her prescribed, limited role.

It is in Alice, however, that the embodiment of stereotypical Chinese womanhood, finds its most perfect production. Alice has lived a life of quiet service, first running her father's home and raising her siblings after the death of their mother, then marrying and seemingly fated to raise another six children, all the while working in a shop. Unsurprisingly, Alice ages quickly, such that when Victoria returns to Georgetown, she is "shocked at how old Alice looked. Her hair was grey and her

dress covered her frame like a dust cover over a piece of furniture" (ibid., p. 14). Importantly, Alice's husband has hardly aged at all. The contrast between the two only re-emphasises the burden-bearer role thrust upon Alice that transforms her into a type of living "Dorian Grey" portrait, wearing all the struggles of West Indian space on her person<sup>228</sup>.

The gap between Helen and Ben in *Timepiece* is not just a gender divide; they also represent philosophical positions or responses to the unsettled times in which they live, just as, in *The Last English Plantation*, Lucille, Boysie and Cyrus stand for different responses to the changes they face. What these characters are disputing is essentially "the ways of doing things, of living" (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 37); "Beneath their everyday lives this struggle of ideas went on constantly" (Shinebourne, *Last English*, p. 101). Part of this struggle involves finding new ways to establish community. Again, Shinebourne and Jin's visions of available options are similar. Both identify a shared ambition to achieve middle-class respectability defined in British standards of norms, styles and values as another space of belonging that is accessible to the Chinese, regardless of "Chineseness".

Lucille and Esther, and to a lesser extent Helen, are parallel figures in the pursuit of respectability. Esther is described as "a converted Christian and a converted 'lady' besides" ('Victoria', p. 12), a phrase that is equally applicable to Lucille. Thus, Esther's concerns are about ensuring that her father-in-law looks respectable by wearing storebought clothes, that Victoria lose her "Berbice talk", and that Victoria

---

<sup>228</sup> The connection between early ageing and the difficult lives of West Indian women is also made in *The Last English Plantation* when June notes that Lucille "was getting older. They said women aged rapidly here" (p. 101). Similarly, in *Timepiece*, when Son comes to find Sandra in the country, she looks far different from the girl who left him in the city: "She looked tired. She had pulled her hair back untidily . . . She was wearing a faded, unfamiliar dress" (p. 176). The reason for this change is that Sandra has stepped into her mother's role in the home. As she says in response to his query about what she has been doing since she left: "Just working like the old lady. In the shop, baking bread, helping the old man with the business. Cooking, cleaning, washing, gardening . . ." (p. 178)

makes appropriate friends, such as Nettie Lee, "a Georgetown girl [who] had been to the Ursuline Convent School in Church Street" (Jin, 'Victoria', pp. 12 and 15). Esther keeps her modern-styled city home immaculate, insists on saying grace before meals, and to Wong's discomfort, serves food like sandwiches rather than roti. Her community, that is, her community of belonging, is composed of those church friends who share similar goals and lifestyles.

Lucille has similar priorities. She too insists that June speak proper English, is always after Cyrus to make improvements to their house and attends church regularly. Her ambition is perhaps most fully expressed in her desire for June to attend highschool. June's first day of school is recognised as

a success for [Lucille] because her dream for June had come true, because she had managed to provide everything needed for June to go to the best school in Berbice. She felt proud and happy . . . From now on, June would be a different child, they would be a different family" (Shinebourne, *Last English*, p. 91).

Like Esther, Lucille is also part of a church community. Lucille is a member of the Mother's Union at her church, where Mrs. Sampson is her particular friend. Mrs. Sampson is the wife of a junior member of staff, but because she is Black, her claim to middle-class respectability is as tenuous as Lucille's; and this uncertainty and shared goals are what draws them together: "Lucille and Mrs. Sampson understood each other's aspirations and because of this they were close . . ." (Shinebourne, *Last English*, p. 100). In this new construction of community, within the confines of British respectability, any signs of ethnic difference are erased: "This is the West Indies, not India, not Africa, not China, the West Indies! We are British" (Shinebourne, *Last English*, p. 128). Belonging is established in terms of assimilation to British standards; or as Shinebourne puts it in her description of Helen and her



church friends: "They had God and flowers in common" (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 30)<sup>229</sup>. "Chineseness" becomes irrelevant in such a space.

Perhaps the reason for the insistence on equating belonging with ethnic invisibility is so important to Jin and Shinebourne's fiction because they are aware of the terrible consequences of mixing race and politics in Guyana. As Sandra puts it: "If you lived by race in this country it killed you one way or the other – you either stifled in your own narrow inwardness or you engaged in conflict. There had to be another way" (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 48). Indeed, to a large degree, both novels can be read as the attempt to find this "other way of being", to imagine Guyana as a space where race or ethnicity cannot be used to create violent divisions because they are not an issue. This is why Shinebourne's fiction, in particular, works so hard to depict Guyana as a place where conflict is identified as a split in interests between the rural communities and Georgetown that is manipulated by politicians into an expression of racial division.<sup>230</sup> In *Timepiece*, Paul describes the race riots as the work of the politicians: "It was all politics man . . . Those dam politicians as usual . . . They stir up and ferment the people, but no-one blames them for it publicly. They just say Guiana

---

<sup>229</sup> The exclusiveness and repression that is integral to the vision of Christianity in Jin and Shinebourne's fiction is rejected by Lee. In his poetry, churches become as much a site of complex and inclusive transactions as the shop. For example, in the poem, 'Right Church, Wrong Pew' (p. 86), the church is the site of social class conflict. Similarly, by entitling the section of his collection on religious poems, 'Church is a Place', Lee implies that church is a microcosm of Jamaican space, just as in the previous section, 'My Mother is a Place', his mother became the representative of the breadth and scope of Jamaican experience. More importantly, Lee depicts church as a place where "Chineseness" can be lived out and expressed, that is, where Chineseness belongs.

Of his childhood, Lee writes: "The Chinese way was the dominant feature of our upbringing, and Christian values and worship were encouraged by my father because he recognised similarities in the Chinese way. Honour for parents and elders, honesty, love of children, kindness to others, respect for the honoured dead, love of God, among others" ('Preface', *Heritage Call* (Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), p. 11). In other words, Christian space and "the Chinese way" overlap making church a site of belonging for the Chinese. In 'Sunday', Lee repeats this idea in verse when the shopkeeper declares church a good thing because it promotes traditional Chinese values: "teach you love God/ love mother love father/ sista, bredda . . . / love alla somebody . . . / teach/respect old people. . . yes/ church good thing" (p. 5).

<sup>230</sup> In *Timepiece*, Shinebourne's describes the 1950s support of the villagers for the People's Progressive Party in this fashion: "People in Pheasant were united racially in support of the party because it signified for them the end of the rule of the plantation in their lives – that was the meaning of those early days of nationalist politics . . . the racial split in the party baffled them . . ." (p. 83).

has race problems. Is politician problem we have" (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, p. 125). Similarly, in *The Last English Plantation*, in response to Boysie's opinion that June not be sent to play with the overseer's daughter because she's White, Cyrus says, "I t'ink he was really talking politics. You know how people always mix up the two" (Shinebourne, *Last English*, p. 16)<sup>231</sup>.

The irony is, however, that Shinebourne's writing actually reinscribes the image of Guyana as divided along racial lines corresponding to a rural/urban split, because that split is imagined as Indo/Afro spaces. For example, when Lucille accuses June of wanting to be a "coolie woman", she is clearly using "coolie" as a synonym for "rural poor"; but "being coolie" is also specifically bound to Indo-Guianese experience. It means, for Lucille, marrying Indo-Guianese men, speaking Hindi, learning mantras and doing puja. Poor, rural communities are thereby identified as Indo-Guianese space; conversely, city space becomes Afro-Guianese space. Thus, Sargeant Richards' argument that Mr. Easen should not be involved in the dispute over Ralph's imprisonment is based on the fact that Easen is Afro-Guianese and therefore belongs in the city:

Times changing, Easen . . . Black man 'in slave in this country no more. You can continue living like slave with coolie 'pon sugar plantation. You don' know black man lef' plantation long time now? You still living in ancient history? Well, road getting build now. You can ride 'pon you bicycle on smooth smooth road all the way to Georgetown now . . . (Shinebourne, *Last English*, p. 171)

The result is that, to a large degree, the Chinese characters must submerge themselves into either group, to become invisible, if they are, paradoxically, to be

---

<sup>231</sup> Shinebourne suggests that using "race" to mark out spaces of belonging is a new, and political manufactured phenomenon in her insistence that it was more or less irrelevant in the past in both the urban and rural areas. For example, Sandra remembers that growing up in the country, "my race didn't seem to matter to anyone" while Son, who grew up in the city, notes "It didn't use to be an issue what race you are except when it was jibe and it hurt, and then your mother and father, if you lucky to have one, would soothe it like so with a kiss" (Shinebourne, *Timepiece*, pp. 153 and 152).



“seen” as valid members of either space. Thus, Sandra complains that “in Georgetown, Indianness, as I lived it in Pheasant, is alien . . . Here in Georgetown I’m not treated as a rural Indian. I think I’m seen partly as Chinese” (*Timepiece*, p. 153). Her difficulty with being seen as Chinese rather than as Indian lies in the fact that Sandra has aligned herself with rural issues. It is in rural space that she feels at home. But, to “be rural” must mean, to Sandra, on some level, to “be Indian”. Being seen as Chinese somehow separates her from that space and it is this separation that she resists. More explicit is June’s experience on the first day of school when the classroom degenerates into a power struggle between the city and urban children. When June becomes involved, Rita, one of the city Indians (significantly, responding to her friend’s challenge to put June in her “place”) simply “put her fingers to her eyes and pulled them upwards into thin slits. ‘Chinky chinee!’” (*ibid.*, p. 73). In doing so, Rita signals that June is outside of the conflict, on the basis of her Chineseness. June recognises that this is what Rita has done because she attempts to re-insert herself into the conflict by announcing: “I am Indian too!” (*ibid.*).

A definition of “West Indian” that requires a certain level of ethnic amnesia on the part of the Chinese is strikingly rejected in Lee’s poetry. Many of Lee’s Chinese characters are unapologetic in their pride of their Chinese heritage and confident in its value. ‘Best Man’, a retelling of man’s creation, for example, declares that “God had made at last/ the perfect man/ the yellow Tong Knin”, while ‘Instructions on Equality’ enjoins the shopkeeper’s son to remember that “no man is your superior/ none your inferior/ you are better than none/ but equal to all”<sup>232</sup>. In doing so, Lee’s poetry brings the Chinese presence explicitly into West Indian space and West Indian space, in this case Jamaican village space, is re-envisioned so that it is not “Black space”. Such

---



reworking of village space is most evident in Lee's poems detailing the relationship between a Chinese shopkeeper and his Jamaican creole wife. In 'Language Class', for example, the wife learns to speak Chinese while teaching her Chinese husband English<sup>233</sup>. Her experience provides an extremely radical revision of Jamaican space in that the wife learns to speak "his strange language/ as though she were born in it" (ibid.). Subtly, Jamaican space has been transformed such that what had been "alien" becomes "native". Similarly, 'Birthday Song' and 'One World' literally insert a Chinese voice into Jamaican space<sup>234</sup>. In 'Birthday Song', although the child is born in Jamaica, he enters the world to the sound of ancient Chinese melodies. Significantly, this song is not deemed out of place, as evidenced in the creole mother's reaction: "though the words were strange/ her full heart/ beat to the rhythm of his voice/ and matched his tune/ with the melody of her own fulfilment" (Lee, 'Birthday Song', p. 41). 'One World' also uses music to portray the coming together of Chinese and Jamaican creole elements in a manner that does not demand the disappearance of "Chineseness" in the image of the Chinese husband and his Jamaican creole wife "singing ancient unfamiliar songs of each others world/ trying to get the words right/ and the tune right" (Lee, 'One World', p. 77). Such representations directly contest the image of Jamaica as a space consisting of "the melody of Europe and the rhythm of Africa"<sup>235</sup>. Instead, they are the fulfilment of Piriag's vision of community: a space where there is no incompatibility between "Chineseness", "being seen" and belonging.

---

<sup>232</sup> Lee, 'Best Man', *From Behind the Counter*, p. 40, and 'Instructions on Equality', *From Behind the Counter*, pp. 43 – 44, p. 44.

<sup>233</sup> Lee, 'Language Class', *Heritage Call*, p. 75.

<sup>234</sup> Lee, 'Birthday Song', *From Behind the Counter*, p. 41 and 'One World', *Heritage Call*, pp. 76 – 77.

<sup>235</sup> In *Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (William Collins and Sangster Ltd., 1970), Rex Nettleford provides this well-known exclusive construct of Jamaican space: "Europe and Africa . . . [forming] . . . an organic whole inextricably bound up and expressive of a new and rich

## "Irretrievably Heterogeneous"<sup>236</sup>

In many ways, the discussion so far can be understood to be part of a larger, perhaps as yet unacknowledged debate, over what it means to "be Chinese" within West Indian space. It raises the issue of the fabrication of an homogenised image of "the Chinese". Such an impetus has been identified as a concern in post-colonial and cultural criticisms. In 'New Ethnicities', for example, Stuart Hall points out that "*the Black Subject*" as a coherent entity does not exist as a stable or universal fact of nature, but rather, as a historical, cultural and political construction, while in terms of the subaltern, Spivak writes: "the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous" (ibid.). Indeed, the danger of a discussion like that of the preceding section is that my comments could be interpreted as designating Lee's characters as somehow "more Chinese" than Jin's or Shinebourne's. That was not my intention. Instead, I want to draw attention to the constitutive nature of the category "Chinese" – that is, that there is no essential Chinese identity but rather many ways of "being Chinese", just as there are many ways of "being West Indian".

Hall perhaps put it best when he wrote (and I have substituted "Chinese" for "Black" in this quotation):

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ['Chinese']; that is the recognition that ['Chinese'] is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature. What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experiences of [Chinese] subjects . . . (Hall, 'New Ethnicities', p. 225)

---

phenomenon which is neither Africa nor Europe, yet embodying the two in unprecedented and creative modes of relationship" (p. 173).

<sup>236</sup> "But one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogenous", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p. 284.

Hall argues that a new dimension in the politics of representation is opened by acknowledging the heterogenous nature of the Black Subject – a dimension in which the concept of ethnicity is contested through the engagement of difference *within* ethnicity. For Chinese West Indian authors, the recognition of difference within the space of “Chinese” is one of the most vivid means of appropriating, challenging and reconstructing settled understandings of “Chineseness” in the West Indies and the boundaries of belonging. In this regard, the representations of the “eleven o’clock children” are significant.

Both Chang and Lee define the term “eleven o’ clock children”, as a Hakka expression used to differentiate between Jamaican-born children of Chinese descent and their China-born counterparts<sup>237</sup>. The act of naming these children in itself destabilises the cohesive concept of “the Chinese” by recognising difference within that space. For Chang, this difference translates into an “us/them” dichotomy. Chang writes: “Those of us born in Jamaica do not and perhaps cannot feel the same about those who come from Mainland China, despite good will and best intentions. And they know the difference too . . .” (Chang, ‘Light’, p. 104). But does this difference mean that there is a “Chinese/non-Chinese” split, or does it simply recognise another way of “being Chinese”?

For Chang, this question is never quite resolved. His translation implies that, from the perspective of home-born Chinese, the “eleven o’clock children” have a “not quite” Chinese status: “we missed the fullness of noon, of being born in China itself” (ibid., p. 104). In contrast, the identity of the brother, born in China, distanced from

---

<sup>237</sup> An important, yet subtle difference in their translation of “eleven o’ clock children” points to differing conceptualisations of the boundaries of “Chinese”. Chang’s definition is more restrictive in that it refers to those of “pure Chinese stock” (‘Light in the Shop’, p. 104), while Lee suggests that it



the English language and from Jamaican creole culture, is never in doubt. For Chang, the question is, does one need to be isolated from Jamaican creole culture to “be Chinese”; or, is “being Chinese” large enough to encompass “being Jamaican”? In the piece, Chang identifies himself as “more Jamaican than Chinese”, but whether this can be understood to be a way of living out “Chineseness” is never explicitly addressed (Chang, ‘Light’, p. 107).

The relationship of the “eleven o’clock children” to other Chinese reveals that, as with the status of the Chinese to the greater West Indian creole community, belonging cannot be achieved without recognition from the dominant group. This conditional inclusion in “Chinese space” is suggested in Lee’s poetry. ‘China Town Story’, for example, begins with the questions “What you name?/ Who your Papa?” (Lee, ‘China Town’, p. 179). Once these factors are established, the individual can be “placed” within the Chinese community (in Chinatown, so to speak). Interestingly, the individual to whom the poem is addressed, an “eleven o’ clock child”, is enjoined to “marry nice Chiney girl”; however, the same requirement does not seem to be placed upon his father who has married a “Jamaican brown woman” (ibid, pp. 179 and 180). It is as if such a marriage would ensure the child’s absolute acceptance in Chinatown, an acceptance that is not an issue for the father. Similarly, in ‘The Visit’, the rich uncle’s inspection covers both the shop and the son. He examines whether the son demonstrates “school good manners on business/ the Chinese way” <sup>238</sup>. The implication is that on some level, the son’s Chinese status must be proven. ‘The Tong Knin’ is even more specific in this regard by claiming that the right to be called “the Tong Knin” by the “eleven o’ clock children” must be earned:

---

applies to any child of a Chinese migrant, including those whose mothers were Jamaican creole (‘Preface’, *Heritage Call*, pp. 9 – 10).

<sup>238</sup> Lee, ‘The Visit’, *From Behind the Counter*, p. 39.

. . . [the] eleven o'clock children  
heard the stories  
of the glories of the motherland  
and the ancient heritage  
learnt the manners  
the codes  
that keeps the race alive  
sustained its people  
for eons  
beyond most others'  
lesser age of reckoning,  
listened to the lore of ancient vintage  
admonished and instructed  
to ensure that we though scattered  
in the corners of the earth  
paid due homage and respect  
to the place of ancestral birth  
*make ourselves worthy  
by wealth and learning  
and proper living  
to be called that name . . .  
the sons and daughters of China  
the Tong Knin. (emphasis added)*<sup>239</sup>

Shinebourne's, 'The Berbice Marriage Match', examines how an arranged marriage is complicated by the multiple ways of being Chinese and, in doing so, she also contests the idea of an homogenous, Chinese community. Instead, "Chinese" is depicted as divided and discordant space where there are many ways of "being Chinese": new immigrant and old immigrant; Hakka and Punti; rich and poor; indentured or free. To this end, Shinebourne's work is not that different from the work of other Chinese West Indian authors who recognise the lack of an essential Chinese identity, particularly in noting the difference between home-born and local-born Chinese: Chang, details the different perspectives and experience between him and his brother in 'Light in the Shop'; in 'Victoria', the heroine rejects a marriage proposal because it is from a "home Chineese" whose "ying-yang ying-yang talk made her feel shame" (Jin, 'Victoria', p. 20); and Lee's description of a visit from a rich city uncle

makes a distinction between rich and poor Chinese. Nevertheless, 'The Berbice Marriage Match', is a more radical questioning of "Chineseness" in that Shinebourne goes beyond merely recognising the heterogenous nature of "Chinese", to rethinking whether or not "Chinese" even exists and daring to ask, "is it so important to be Chinese or possible to be Chinese here in British Guiana?"(Shinebourne, 'Marriage Match', p. 5)

At first reading, it seems that Shinebourne has re-inscribed typical cultural markers to define Chinese and non-Chinese spaces. After all, Ruth and her sisters consider themselves to be Guianese instead of Chinese because, like their mother, Enid, they were raised Catholic "without any Chinese customs"<sup>240</sup>; further, Enid has East Indian parentage and is therefore not "pure" Chinese. They are contrasted with the Choys, a family of more recent immigrants to Guyana, who adhere to more traditional Chinese cultural norms and fashions. For example, Mrs. Choy has difficulty speaking English, wears traditional Chinese-styled clothing and keeps her hair in a bun rather than cut and permed in what Enid calls "English-style" (ibid., p. 6). The Choys also serve traditional Chinese foods (contrasted with the creole feast the Lis indulge in on their trip), decorate their home with artefacts from China, and observe traditional forms of Chinese etiquette. Such realities lead Enid to feel that with the Choys "she was in the presence of what must surely be a *genuine Chinese*", just as they lead Alexander's siblings to reject the Lis on the grounds that they are "not 'real' Chinese . . . they were Creole" (ibid., pp. 6 and 7, emphasis added).

Despite these conventionalities, the representation of Enid, in particular, provides a distinct departure from an understanding of Chinese space as being rigidly bounded by ethnocultural and phenotypical markers. This is demonstrated by the

---

<sup>239</sup> Lee, 'The Tong Knin, *Heritage Call*, p. 85.



simple fact that regardless of her inability to speak Chinese, her mixed-race ancestry, and her lack of Chinese customs, Enid considers herself to be Chinese. She places herself within the definition of Chinese largely by choice – that is by regularly listening to lectures on Chinese culture and by associating with the Chinese community of Georgetown. “Chineseness” is thus transformed from something that is innate into something chosen. Such an understanding of “Chineseness” destroys one of its most stable boundaries – physical features. If “Chineseness” is a matter of choice, then just because one “looks Chinese”, does not mean that one necessarily must be included in that space. One can choose otherwise. In this sense, this is what Enid’s daughters have done by choosing to “be Guianese” rather than “Chinese”, just as in *Timepiece*, Sandra chooses to “be Indian”.

Shinebourne’s depiction of Enid and her daughters also suggests another radical idea; namely, that ethnic identities exist only when there is some benefit gained from them. It is the same concept that Hall recognises when writing about Black British identity he argues:

... ‘black’ was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, amongst groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities. In this moment, politically speaking, ‘The Black experience’, as a singular and unifying framework . . . became ‘hegemonic’. (Hall, ‘New Ethnicities’, p. 223)

In ‘The Berbice Marriage Match’, “Chineseness” does not have political value, but it can bring about financial gain<sup>240</sup>. After all, Enid’s inclusion in Chinese-Guyanese space allows her access to the financial assistance of the Chinese community to help

---

<sup>240</sup> Shinebourne, ‘The Berbice Marriage Match’, p. 5.

<sup>241</sup> In contrast, in ‘Short Fuse’, Gladys only claims access to a specific “Chinese space” when reading about the violent racial conflicts in Guyana. In this case, “Chineseness” has political value in that it removes her from the conflict by placing her in neutral space. This is the moment when, reading her husband’s letter, she declares: “Black against East Indian and we Chinney in between” (p. 96).

her raise her family. Similarly, Ruth's ability to be seen as Chinese will assist in ensuring a good marriage match for her. In fact, Ruth's surprise decision to go through with the arranged marriage is partially based on her recognition that such a union would bring about some very specific material benefits for her and her family:

Canje was not a bad place. It was big and spacious. It was a good place to raise a family. It was somewhere her sisters and mother could visit to get away from Georgetown . . . perhaps Alexander would do so well, they would live in their own house and she would be able to look after her mother in her old age . . . His bakery was also doing well. He was a breadwinner . . . He could be the best husband she would get. (Shinebourne, 'Marriage Match', p. 8)

'The Berbice Marriage Match' is also radical in its depiction of the impact of creole space on "being Chinese": creole space facilitates "Chineseness". In comparison, for example, the creole space in 'Light in the Shop' is disruptive in that it erodes "Chineseness". For Shinebourne, however, creole West Indian space is the condition under which a myriad ways of "being Chinese" can occur. This is symbolised through the matchmaker role played by the creole schoolteacher Elizabeth Waldron. She acts as a translator between the two families, conducts correspondence on behalf of Mrs. Choy, and even explains some of the history of the Chinese in Guyana to the Li sisters. Her role is essentially as negotiator between different understandings and expressions of "Chineseness" and she is, to a large degree, the reason that Ruth and Alexander are eventually able to come together.

In 'London and New York', Shinebourne more fully explores her challenge to the limited spaces of belonging allowed to Chinese, particularly because of their physical features through a main character who continually transcends boundaries of belonging, rejecting them as being as artificial in their exclusivity as the divisions

between males and females in her father's shop<sup>242</sup>. The story is set in three restaurants around London, each representing three spaces of belonging for the narrator: a Chinese restaurant; an Indian restaurant; and a restaurant serving traditional Afro-creole Guianese food. Each of these spaces are "home spaces" for the narrator, despite the fact that she does not "look" quite right in them and the fact that they are all very different spaces. At the Chinese restaurant, the food reminds her of her grandmother's cooking; the Indian restaurant's curries are somewhat similar to the Guianese curries that make up "part of the creole diet" (Shinebourne, 'London', p. 3); and the menu at the Afro-Guianese restaurant reflects that of her mother's and her own cooking. Importantly, even though all three restaurants are designated specific, or exclusive sites (that is, of "being Chinese" or "being Indian" or "being Afro-Guianese"), they are also sites of boundary transgression that destroy the very borders that they assert. For example, at the Chinese restaurant, the narrator declares "I taste East Indian duck in their Chinese duck, I taste Guyanese calaloo in Chinese greens" (ibid., p. 2). Similarly, the Indian restaurant is not only filled with people from different ethnic groups, the curry prepared there is different from what she eats at home and in Guyana. There are, in other words, alternate ways of "cooking Indian" as there are in "being Indian". The point is that just as the restaurants are not truly exclusive, there are no absolute boundaries in terms of the narrator's space of belonging – which takes the reader to the final location of the story, Chinatown, New York.

In Chinatown, despite its designation as "Chinese space", the narrator feels "lost, far away from home" (ibid., p. 5). She is struck by the vast differences between "Chinese space" in London and New York. In particular, she cannot find red bean

---

<sup>242</sup> The shop is divided into a cake shop and a grocery. Generally, the men and women each monopolize one side of the store. The narrator notes', "In Father's place, it was the times that the barriers between these came down that he liked, the times you would find men and women, children and adults not in an exclusive space, but talking to each other" (p. 4).



cakes, a delicacy that she normally looks for in London's Chinatown district. In New York's Chinatown, they have red bean cakes, but not the type that she is familiar with. In fact, she only finds what she is looking for when she leaves "Chinese space" and goes to a Guianese restaurant in Brooklyn. For the narrator, the "Cakes had become a metaphor of home" and in her search for them (their different locations and different ways of being made), she has been forced to realise that "home" is never stable. "Home" or "belonging" is constantly being redefined, negotiated, disturbed and lived in a variety of ways by a variety of people:

In London I get red bean cakes in Chinatown but not in Guyanese restaurants. In New York I do not find them in Chinatown but in a Guyanese restaurant in Brooklyn. As I ate the cake, I felt I had arrived in New York but the journey I took to get here was one in which I had to negotiate a chain of cultural translations to get "home". (ibid., p. 6)

Importantly, the New York section contains a scene in which the narrator asks for directions from a woman on the street. The narrator recognises that the woman has a Dominican Republican accent and the woman tells the narrator: "You have an English and a Caribbean accent" (ibid., p. 5). The encounter reminds the narrator "how Caribbean people have developed the skills of cultural translation . . . learning to recognise and use them to map our everyday transaction" (ibid.). In the casual acceptance of the cultural border transgressions made by both women, West Indian space receives its only definitive boundary: no boundary at all. Rather, it is a space of change and transformation where "Chinese", "nation", and even "belonging" are never entirely stable, but are "irretrievably heterogenous".

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how the construction of "the Chinese" by the minority Self responds to the pressures of belonging in West Indian spaces. There is

obviously some tendency to inhabit previously marked out sites of belonging, as per colonial and creole discourse. To do so, means to enter into inherently ambiguous spaces of belonging because neither discourse ever produced stable images of the Chinese. Thus, the image of the alien Chinese exists alongside the assimilated Chinese in such works, as it did in work by others. The invisibility of the assimilated Chinese often produced in these works, however, does raise questions as to how secure their belonging is. If it is indeed based only on their not “being seen”, West Indian space continues to be marked out as non-Chinese, even by Chinese West Indian authors, and there is no real belonging for the Chinese. In fact, such images do not at all contest the construction of West Indian spaces in exclusive terms. At the same time, such images raise another question, namely, can one “be Chinese” without demonstrating “Chineseness”? That is, can so-called invisibility actually be another way of “being Chinese”?

What is at issue is the constitutive nature of “Chinese space” and the question of who belongs within its boundaries, an issue that is particularly apparent in Shinebourne’s fiction. Her work introduces a new level of ambiguity into the already unstable space of nation; for if the Chinese are the boundary markers of belonging, and the boundary markers are themselves always shifting, then how can belonging to the nation ever be stable? Instead, her Chinese representations force a recognition of the constructed nature of nation and the unevenness of belonging therein, and brings us closer to engaging new strategies of representation in which ambiguity is recognised as a central component within “belonging” itself.

## Conclusion

Anglophone West Indian nations, as with nations in general, exist to a large degree in an imagined environment – a space defined in images of belonging. Although they have never composed more than a fragment of the overall populations in the West Indian nations in which they have come to reside, the Chinese communities had, and continue to have, a significant impact on how the boundaries of these nations as spaces of belonging are created and maintained. At the same time, images of the Chinese in the West Indies reveal that these same boundaries and belonging itself are never static; rather they are dynamic processes that exist in a continual state of negotiation and transformation.

Nation itself is an unstable concept, existing in the tension of “being” and “becoming” that contributes to equally unstable images of the Chinese in terms of belonging to the nation space. This slippage is particularly evident in the exercise of nation-building. For example, the image of the West Indies as an inclusive site of multiethnic exchange is continually disrupted by images of the Chinese as aliens and outsiders.

During the nineteenth century, representations of the Chinese and their relationships to other members of West Indian spaces were explicitly linked to the peculiar designs of colonial discourse. At issue was not nation as a political entity *per se*, but belonging in terms of strategies for maintaining power and privilege. Images of the Chinese positioned them either within or without defined spaces in the colonial order depending on which images best supported that order.



From the twentieth century onward, members of West Indian spaces were more consciously aware of themselves as a community in terms of nation. As with the nineteenth century, the question of access to power remained an integral component in the construction of "the Chinese". Also impacting the fabrication of images of the Chinese was the need to be seen and recognised as a nation in the global arena. The ambivalence in nineteenth century images of the Chinese is also apparent in the twentieth century. Indeed, the Chinese are routinely cast in a double-role as both insiders and outsiders to the nation as a means of establishing and performing community and of exploring power issues. "The Chinese" is therefore an articulation of a boundary both within and without the nation.

The significant role accorded to the Chinese in terms of establishing boundaries of belonging has resulted in "Chinese" becoming a highly coded concept. Self-representation for Chinese West Indian authors takes place within the context of such codes. Their attempts to represent themselves and to explore their experiences in West Indian space, forces them to make one of three choices: to accommodate to established images of the Chinese; to contest them; or to re-envision the concepts of "belonging", "nation" and "Chinese".

The results of this research challenge the idea that the Chinese are marginal to West Indian experience and that "In the society as a whole, the tendency is to place immigrants outside the significant structures of relationships established during slavery between black, white and coloured groups"<sup>243</sup>. The Chinese have played, and continue to play, an important role in the imagined landscape of the West Indies. The relationship between the Chinese and the greater creole society is more complex and integral to understanding how nation is symbolised and performed in the West Indies

– how the West Indies “sees itself”. On a broader scale, the ambiguities and inconsistencies revealed in the representations of the Chinese in the West Indies, forces us to recognise that, in terms of spaces of belonging, absolutes are artificial. Boundaries are constantly being constructed and contested, imposed and resisted. Indeed, the “living out of belonging”, as with “being Chinese”, is itself the living out of ambivalence.

---

<sup>243</sup> Joyce Johnson, ‘Representation of the Chinese in Anglophone Caribbean Fiction’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 16(3) (1997), 36–54 (p. 52).

**NATIONAL ANTHEMS**

**Jamaica**

Eternal Father, bless our land,  
Guard us with Thy Mighty Hand,  
Keep us free from evil powers,  
Be our light through countless hours.  
To our leaders, Great Defender,  
Grant true wisdom from above.  
Justice, truth be ours forever,  
Jamaica, land we love.  
Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica, land we love.

Teach us true respect for all,  
Stir response to duty's call,  
Strengthen us the weak to cherish,  
Give us vision lest we perish.  
Knowledge send us, Heavenly Father,  
Grant true wisdom from above.  
Justice, truth be ours forever,  
Jamaica, land we love.  
Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica, land we love.

**Trinidad**

Forged from the love of liberty,  
In the fires of hope and prayer,  
With boundless faith in our destiny,  
We solemnly declare:  
Side by side we stand,  
Islands of the blue Caribbean Sea.  
This our native land,  
We pledge our lives to thee.  
Here every creed and race,  
Find an equal place,  
And may God bless our nation.  
Here every creed and race,  
Find an equal place,  
And may God bless our nation.

**Guyana**

Dear land of Guyana, of rivers and plains,  
Made rich by the sunshine, and lush by the rains.  
Set gem-like and fair, between mountains and sea,  
Your children salute you, dear land of the free.

Green land of Guyana, our heroes of yore,  
Both bondsmen and free, laid their bones on your shore.  
This soil so they hallowed, and from them are we,  
All sons of one mother, Guyana the free.

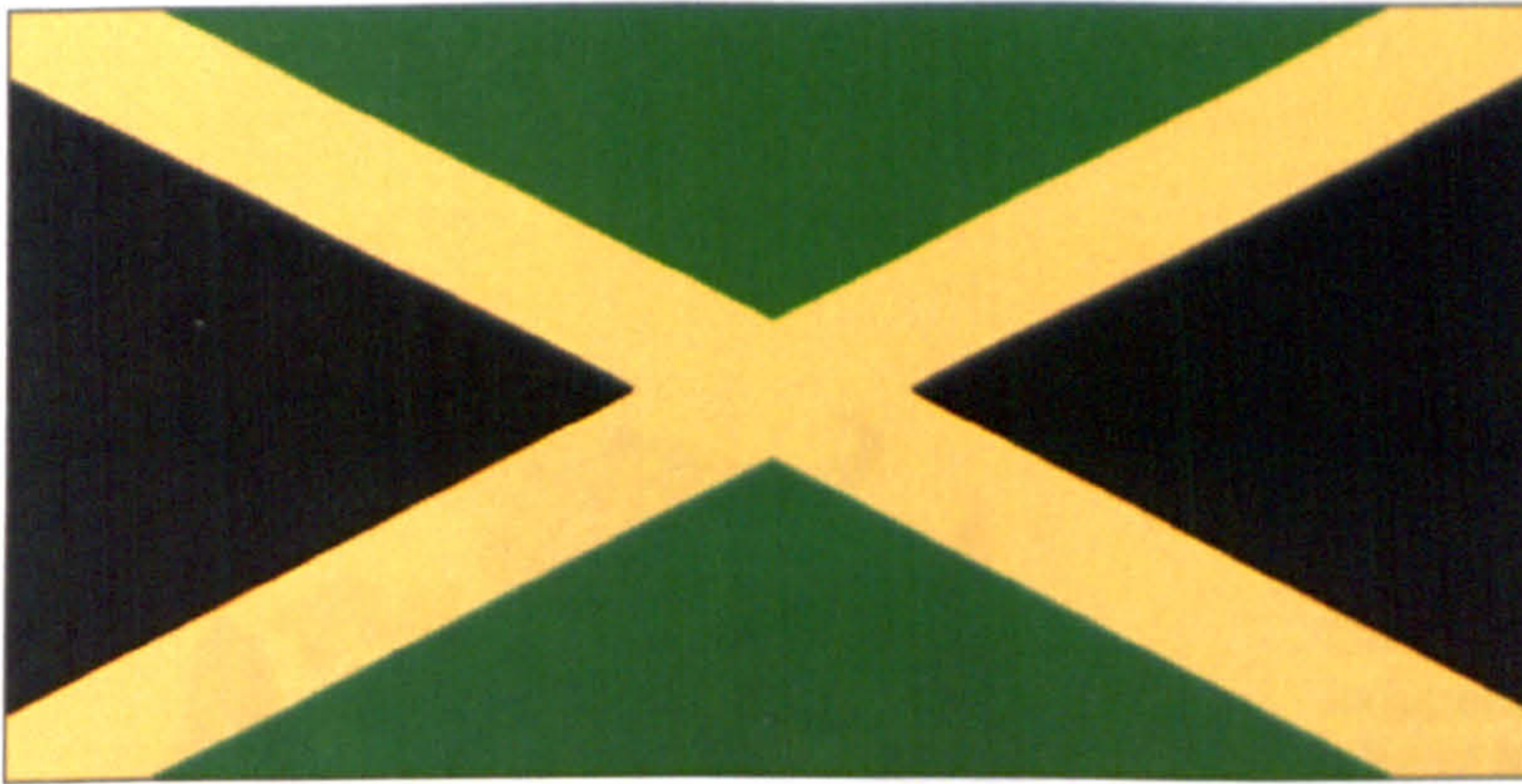
Great land of Guyana, diverse though our strains,  
We are born of their sacrifice, heirs of their pains.  
And ours is the glory their eyes did not see,  
One land of six peoples, united and free.

Dear land of Guyana, to you will we give,  
Our homage, our service, each day that we live.  
God guard you, Great Mother, and make us to be  
More worthy our heritage, land of the free

*Source: Caribbean Central, [www.caribcentral.com](http://www.caribcentral.com) (as of August 2002).*

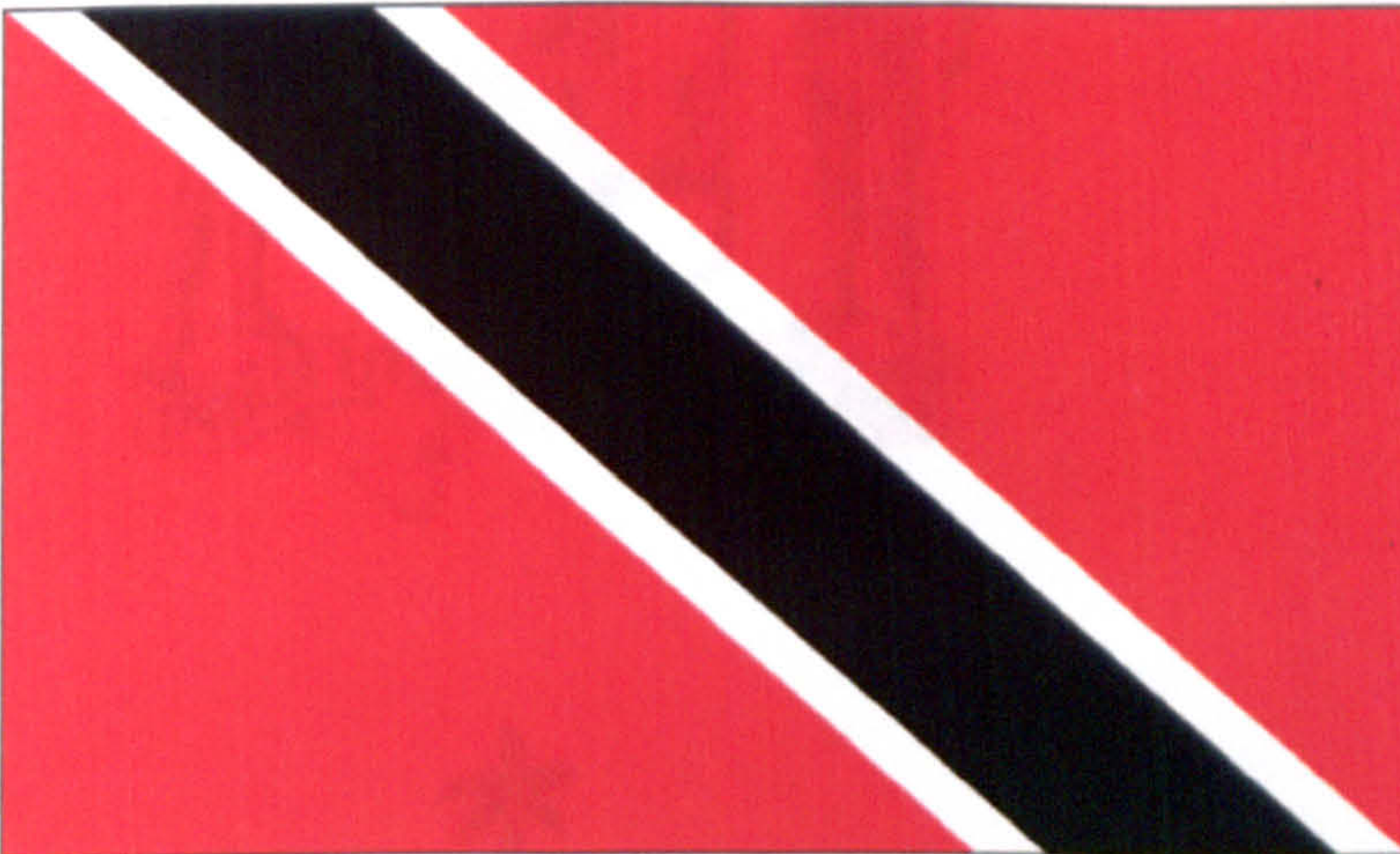


## NATIONAL FLAGS



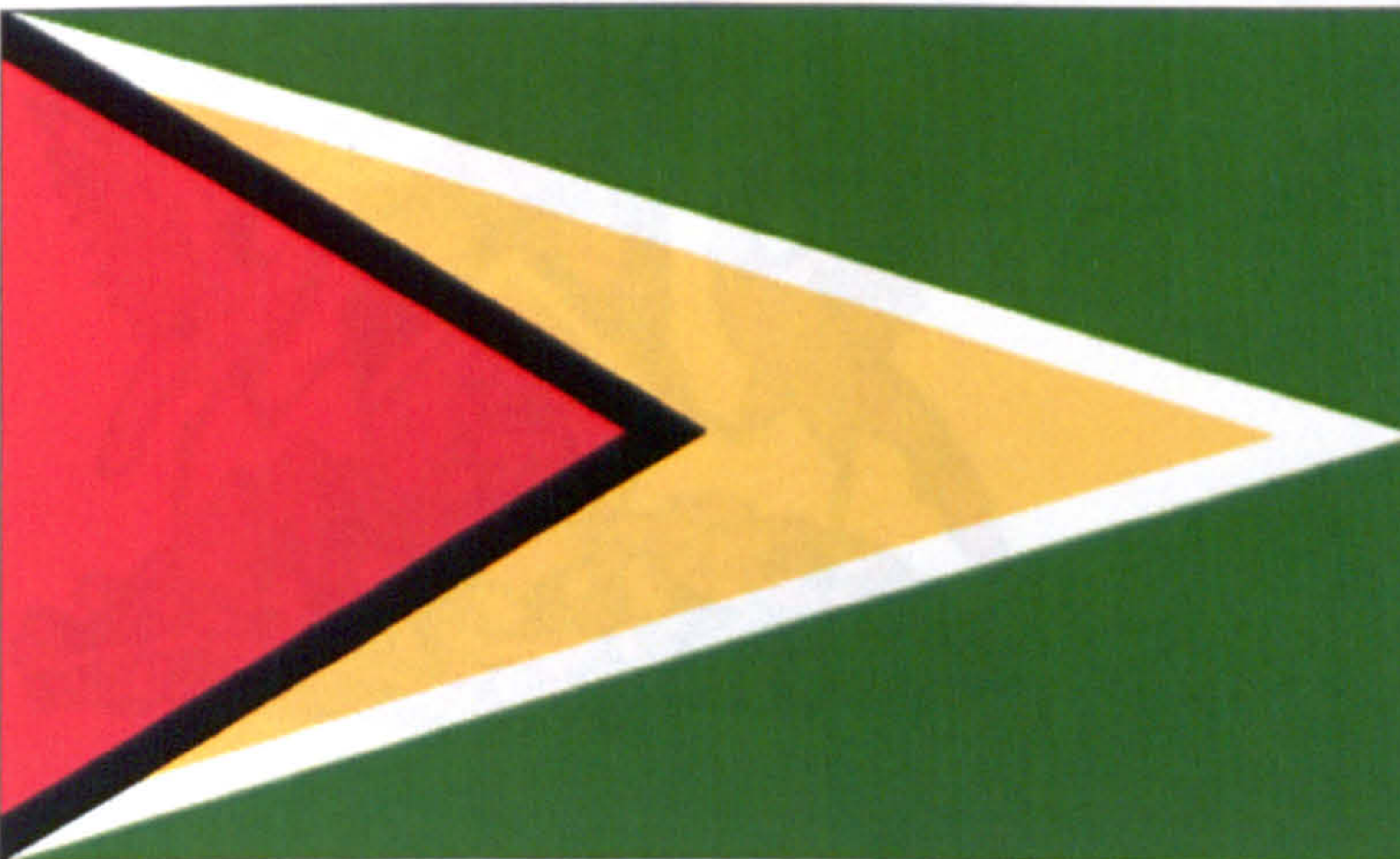
### Jamaica

Green: hope and agricultural wealth  
Black: hardships (past and future)  
Gold: sunlight and mineral wealth



### Trinidad and Tobago

Black: dedication, people joined by a strong bond, strength, unity of purpose, wealth of land  
Red: vitality of land and people, courage, friendliness, warmth and energy of the sun  
White: sea, cradle of heritage, purity of aspirations, equality of all under the sun



### Guyana

Green: rich forests and agriculture  
White: waters  
Gold: mineral resources  
Black: people's courage and strength  
Red: people's fiery spirit, energy

Sources: World Flag Database, [www.flags.net](http://www.flags.net) (as of August 2002), Sweet Jamaica, [www.sweet-jamaica.com](http://www.sweet-jamaica.com) (as of August 2002), Alana's Trinbago Pages, <http://users.erols.com/alana.interport/trinbago.html> (as of August 2002), Caribbean Central, [www.caribcentral.com](http://www.caribcentral.com) (as of August 2002)



## COAT OF ARMS



### Jamaica

Although used since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Coat of Arms was officially adopted at independence, the same year the motto, 'Out of Many, One' was added.



### Trinidad and Tobago

The coat of arms displays the three hills of Trinidad, Columbus' three ships. The Cocrico bird is above the words 'Together we achieve', while the red ibis stands on the opposite side.



## Guyana



The Amerindians are symbolised by the head-dress, the mining industry by the diamonds on either side of the headress, while the sugar and rice industries are represented by the pickaxe and the sugar and rice stalks. The three blue lines represent Guyana's waters.

*Source: International Civic Heraldry, [www.ngw.nl](http://www.ngw.nl) (as of August 2002).*

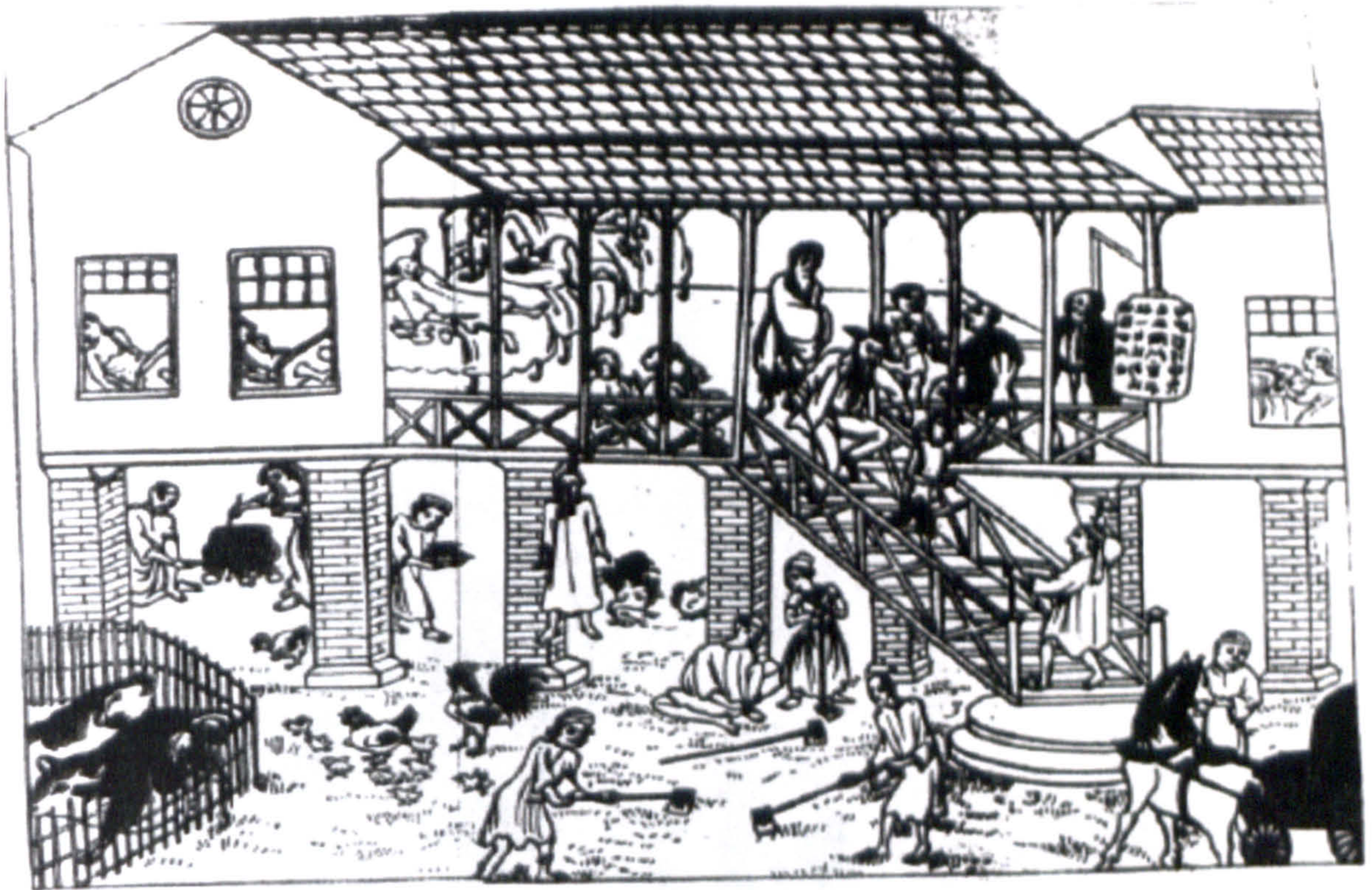




'The picture [above] is a tolerably fair representation of the manager's house on its brick pillars. To the left, at the bottom of the picture is a free Coolie driving his cattle. To the right a rural constable is seizing an unhappy pigtail to convey him to the lock-up, being absent, as we see, from the band just above him, with his arms unbound. This indicates that he is trying to avoid the restraints of his indenture, and for this he is liable to punishment. Above him, on the right of the picture, is a group of Chineses, and on the left of the steps a group of Indians, represented with their arms bound, an emblem of indentureship. They always speak of themselves as 'bound' when under indenture. At the foot of the steps, on either side, is a Chinaman and a Coolie, from whose breasts two drivers are drawing blood with a knife, the life fluid being caught by boys in the swizzle-glasses of the colony. A boy is carrying the glasses up the steps to the attorney and the manager, who sit on the left of the verandah, and are obviously fattening at the expense of the bound people below them. A fat wife and children look out of the windows. Behind, through a break in the wall, are represented the happy and healthy owners in England; to the right, under the tree, through a gap in the fence, are aged Chineses, weeping over their unfortunate relatives. In the right-hand corner of the verandah is the pay-table, with the overseers discussing and arranging stoppages of wages. The smoking chimney of the kitchen and the horse eating his provender seem to be intended to contrast with the scene in front. This, then, gives a picturesquely sentimental and satirical aspect of the grievances likely to arise under the Coolie system.'

Source: Edward Jenkins, *The Coolie*, pp. 9 – 12.





‘The picture [above] represents a more specific issue – that upon the point of treatment in hospital. Here we have a hospital, a large, airy building. On the left, through the windows, two men are shown in the stocks. Whether these were used or not upon any estates was an important question in the inquiry [Royal Commission, 1871]. Next, to the right, are bedsteads, on which lie the patients. The nearest, a Chinaman, is just expiring, spite of the chicken soup – *vide* the chicken in the basin – which has been supplied to him *in extremis*. The question of the actual supply of nourishing food in the hospitals when ordered by the doctors was another point raised by the Commission. Again, in the middle we see two stout immigrants whom the doctor, sitting in the chair, is tenderly treating, while the manager kicks down the steps a meagre wretch, too weak to be worth curing. Another issue – are all immigrants equally and properly treated in hospital? Look at the stout black nurse standing beside the ‘diet-list,’ whereon is officially inscribed, in Chinese, Indian, and English, the scale of diet, by which the patient who can read may ascertain whether the doctor’s instructions are carried out as regards him or his fellows. Beyond, in the room to the right, is the black man’s favourite, feeding on the dainties and porter ordered for the patients. A clear question is raised here – Whether the subordinates do not cheat both their masters and the Coolies? Below we see the doctor’s horse, well fed; to the left, the manager’s pigs, well fed; and about and under the house, crowing and fighting cocks, well fed; while thin wretches hoe the ground, and a desperate Chinaman hangs himself from the verandah. All this is powerfully satirical. And, lastly, we have the black cook issuing the rations, and stirring the chicken broth – the chicken all the while running about safely outside the pot!’

Source: Edward Jenkins, *The Coolie*, pp. 11 – 13.





The ambiguities of nineteenth century Chinese representations are also evident in illustrations of the Chinese. Of great importance to colonial discourse was the image of Chinese assimilation to Western norms and values as ‘proof’ of Western cultural superiority. One of the interesting means by which this was asserted, particularly in Guyana, was by insisting that the Chinese migrants had adopted Western fashions. Common illustrations of the Chinese during this period, however, continued to depict them in more traditional garb (see also Appendix D, p. viii). This inconsistency points to the continued need to identify the Chinese as ‘Other’ and undermines the implicit and explicit claim that the Chinese recognised the superiority of the West that reports of Chinese wearing Western fashions purported.

*Source: Charles Kingsley, At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies, p. 73.*





The colonial discourse within which nineteenth century representations of the Chinese in the West Indies were fabricated sought to depict the Chinese as a 'buffer zone' community between the White and Black creole elements in the population. To this end, Chinese migrants were often described in terms that established them as a distinctly discrete, 'middle-man' community within West Indian society. Such an image could never be stable, however, for colonial discourse also asserted a division between 'Whites' and a generic 'all the Others' category. On such occasions, the Chinese were submerged into this 'Other' category and became part of the very same segment of society from which, at other times, they were made to seem so far removed.

The illustration above demonstrates this ambivalence. On the one hand, the picture clearly illustrates the 'lower orders', consisting of (from left to right) Black creoles, migrants from India, and migrants from China. The Chinese migrants are clearly part of this group. On the other hand, all three groups remain distinct from each other, as indicated by their dress and by the fact that they remain in separate clusters, rather than mingling amongst each other.

*Source: Charles Kingsley, At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies, p. 304.*



My grandfather died before my father was a year old. My father never knew him and, as a result, I know nothing substantial about him. I don't know where he came from or why he left China, how he met my grandmother or what his life was like in Jamaica – I'm not even sure that I know his real name. He left no letters or papers that I am aware of, and I would not be able to read them if he had. He exists only in my imagination, constructed, 'Frankenstein-like' (and just as contorted) from a motley collection of historical facts, movie images and fragments of family anecdotes. My grandfather's absolute silence allows me a space of wondrous creativity. I can, without challenge, imagine him as I please. But this is also a space of distortion; for in the end, it is never him I am creating, but images of me – reshaped and reconfigured though they be.

In many ways, silence is also at the centre of issues involving the representation of the Chinese in the West Indies. With very few authors publishing, their collective lack of voice allows others a great amount of freedom to fabricate, impose and disseminate images of the Chinese. Easton Lee has suggested that part of the reason for this silence may lie in language when he recognised that for many Chinese, English may not be their most comfortable mode of expression. It may be, then, not so much that the Chinese are silent, as it is that we might not be able to hear them.

Again, my own family history reflects this issue. My father's only brother, Vincent Lee, was, like so many young Chinese Jamaicans during the early twentieth century, sent to China to be 'sinicised' and would not return until he was a man already in his late twenties. He would live in Jamaica for a decade before migrating to the United States. He has taken the time to write out an autobiography of sorts, detailing his experiences from childhood to adulthood, across three countries, and through some of the tumultuous events of the twentieth century. Yet, because it is written in Chinese characters, it remains, for the most part, inaccessible to me, although not for lack of trying. It has, however, been difficult to find someone who is willing to expend the time and effort to make such a translation, and more importantly, to recognise the value of such effort. And there is value in it. Those pages provide a new note in a West Indian melody that has never been quite complete and offer the reader the opportunity to listen once more to the familiar song of West Indian experiences.

The following pages, excerpts from my uncle's manuscript, may not be of sparkling literary quality or groundbreaking historical discovery; but they do represent a new voice in West Indian space. And sometimes, just hearing the voice is what matters<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation provided by Ms. Kathy Lee.

## PREFACE

*The shell of the body rests beneath the earth, the soul continues to linger.  
Life is a dream.*

The twentieth century is a turbulent age. I was born in the middle of the age. When I was writing my autobiography in 1997, I was already 66 years old. I've experienced all kinds of events in my life. Fate had predestined that my career pursuits would be unaccomplished. It also led me to walk in narrow and crooked paths. I've been married thrice, carry the blood of two races, and speak Cantonese and English. I have had homes in three countries and children of Chinese and Black origins.

I received a limited standard of education. I can't write elegantly, but this is my own story – one that tells about the people I've met, and the environments I've lived in for the past few decades. I hope that through this work, my offspring can understand me better. Any others who might find it worth reading, will find a story that reflects the lives of my generation.



## I GO TO CHINA

On March 13th, 1931, I was born in the parish of St. Ann, Jamaica. I have three elder sisters and a younger brother. When my mother was carrying my third sister, my father received a letter from my grandmother in China, saying that his wife there had died, leaving their son Lee Chun Wah behind. His mother wanted him to return home and remarry so that there would be someone to take care of the motherless child.

As my father had not told his Chinese relatives, not even his parents, about his marriage<sup>2</sup> to my mother, he had no choice but to obey his mother's instruction. So, in the springtime of 1928, he flew to China and immediately married a woman by the surname of Choi. She got pregnant almost right away and gave birth to a daughter after only a year of marriage. This child, however, died young. After one year, my father returned to Jamaica and back to my mother again. By the time he returned, my third sister was already one-year old.

Upon his return, my father did not live with my mother in the country. Instead, he moved to the city. Every few months, however, he would come to the country to visit his family. A year after his return to Jamaica, my mother got pregnant again. This time, it was me. My father wasn't there when I was born. The first time he saw me, I was already one-month old. When I was two-years old, my family finally lived together. We moved to a place called Ramble, which is not far away from the city of Oracabesa, where my father ran his own grocery.

There was a Chinese man by the surname of Ko who provided goods to my father. In turn, my father had to go to the city once a week to pick them up. Sometimes, that Chinese man would come to check on my father's business<sup>3</sup>.

After a while, my father got sick. His whole body turned yellow. My mother asked him to go to the hospital, but at first, he ignored her. Later, when the illness got worse, he sent a message to the city, asking his uncle to take him to the doctor for medical treatment. The uncle came to get him, but instead of taking him to the doctor, the uncle treated him with Chinese medicine. No sooner, my father died. The following day, my mother, who had been waiting desperately for my father's return, learned the heartbreaking news. Tearfully, she took all five children to the grocery, hoping that she could at least get some food to feed the family. But, Ko had already sent someone to seal off the grocery. She was not allowed to go in anymore<sup>4</sup>. My father had died leaving no will, not even a scrap of paper indicating how his affairs should be handled. My mother was left with nothing.

It was 1935. My younger brother was only a few months old, and I was only four. My widowed mother took us to her elder brother and we lived temporarily at his place in Oracabesa. As her brother was not wealthy, we led a very hard life.

One of my father's relatives owned a grocery in the same city. Before my father went to China to remarry, he had run this business. But, as I was told, he obeyed his mother's instruction to give it to his cousin Lee Kai Tung, who then passed it to Lee Kai Him, the son of my grandfather's brother. Because of our family ties and, feeling

---

<sup>2</sup> As was common practice for many Chinese migrants in Jamaica, this relationship was common law, rather than a legally recognised marriage.

<sup>3</sup> Family anecdotes suggest that he had lost the grocery through gambling. It is possible that this man, Ko, was the individual who had won it.

<sup>4</sup> As with many shopkeeper families, they had been living in the back of the grocery. With the death of the father, they could no longer access that living space.

sympathy for my mother's hardships, Lee Kai Him rented us an apartment, offered to pay our living costs, and visited us frequently. Lee Kai Him liked me a lot. No sooner, he asked my mother's permission to adopt me and she agreed to the arrangement<sup>5</sup>. From that time onwards, I would often go and play in his grocery and stay there overnight. Sometimes I would eat breakfast at his place and then go home to eat breakfast again. My sisters would tease me by calling me 'Two Teas.'

After some time, Lee Kai Him told my mother that he knew someone who was going to China. He wanted to take the opportunity to send me back to China<sup>6</sup>. He persuaded her that it would be best for me to be raised in China and that, when I had grown, I could return to Jamaica. My mother really had no choice but to agree to the proposition as Lee Kai Him was supporting the family – what else could she do? Lee Kai Him took me to the city and applied for the travel documents. I would not see my mother, sisters and brother again until my return many years later.

In October 1936, Lee Kai Him sent me back to China. Upon boarding the merchant ship in Jamaica, I saw ten or more children who were also making the trip back to China. The ship sailed via the Cape of Good Hope and after forty days at sea, it landed at Hong Kong. All through the journey, there was a Chinese woman in charge of us. We were kept in a cabin. No one was allowed to go onto the deck for the entire forty-day journey!

When I landed in Hong Kong, Lee Chi Chiu, the son of Lee Kai Him, was already there waiting for me. We stayed in a motel for a night. I remember that when I was in the motel, I found a tricycle and rode on it. But while playing, I hit the wall. He scolded me and stopped me from riding anymore. The next day, we got on the train to Lo Wu and headed on to the Wang Kong Tau Village, Nan Keng Xiang, Wei Yeung County of Canton Province.

---

<sup>5</sup> This was not a legal adoption; however, it meant that Lee Kai Him would treat the author as a son.

<sup>6</sup> Note the repeated use of the idea that he would be sent "back to China", although in reality, he (and possibly the other children on the journey) had never been to China. Such language creates the sense that the Chinese in Jamaica "belong" to China, regardless of where they were born.



## RETURN TO JAMAICA

In the afternoon of 10<sup>th</sup> September 1959, I got on a sea liner, the *Wilson*, from the Hong Kong ferry. We were in the Pacific Ocean for nineteen days. During the journey, we passed Tokyo and Hawaii until we landed in San Francisco. On the ship, I met two other Hakkas, one named Cheung Fan, the other, Cheng Kay. Since we were all heading to Jamaica, we became travel partners.

After debarking in San Francisco, we ate a Chinese meal in Chinatown and spent a night there. The next day, we got to the airport by bus and flew to Los Angeles where we were to get a connecting flight to Miami. While waiting for the flight, Cheng was desperate to pee, but we could not find the toilet there. Since none of us knew English – well, Cheung knew a bit – and as nobody Chinese was around for us to ask for help, we turned to a Chinese-English Self-taught dictionary that I had happened to bring along with me. We flipped through the pages quickly but there was no such word as “toilet”, only “washroom”. So we pointed out the English word to a White guy, who then took Cheung to the toilet.

We waited for the plane to Miami in the airport lounge for an hour before it finally came. When we arrived at the Miami airport, there was no flight to Jamaica. Since the airline did not pay for a stay-over in a hotel, we decided to stay overnight in the airport. As chance would have it, we met a Chinese man called Wong Chok Chao. He worked for an airline and lived downtown with his family. That night, he invited us to sleep at his place. He wrote down the addresses and telephone numbers of our relatives in Jamaica, and asked us to mail the hotel fee back to him as soon as we got there. The next day, Mr. Wong drove us back to the airport. The flight to Jamaica went smoothly.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1959, I arrived in Jamaica. It is my birthplace and yet, I felt so far away from it. When I got off the plane, I looked straight ahead and saw three men and two women standing outside the wooden exit gateway. One of them was my mother. As soon as I walked out of the gateway, my mother approached me. She took a close look at my eyebrow<sup>7</sup>. After awhile, she hugged and kissed me affectionately. Later on, my elder sister also came and kissed me while the rest of the relatives, such as Auntie Ching Yuen and her husband, Uncle Willie and Ruby's husband, shook hands with me. Later, we got in Uncle Willie's car and went to his place.

When we were at Uncle Willie's home, Auntie Ching Yuen asked me to live with her in the country, since I couldn't speak English. I declined her proposal instantly because I wanted to live with Uncle Willie. Auntie Ching Yuen and I had never exchanged correspondence, and, in comparison to Uncle Willie, I was not acquainted with her at all. She never helped me and I had no idea why she would want me to stay with her. My mother also thought that I should stay with Uncle Willie, so that I could learn English from him. Besides, it was all because of Uncle Willie's money that I had the chance to return to Jamaica. If I were to leave Uncle Willie so soon upon my return to Jamaica, I would be a very ungrateful person. I also owed the airlines the airfare, which I had to pay back in installments of £18 a month<sup>8</sup>. It was decided that I would stay with Uncle Willie.

---

<sup>7</sup> She was looking for a childhood scar in his eyebrow to make sure he really was her son.

<sup>8</sup> The Red Cross had organised his trip from China after his family had contacted them to see if they could locate him in China.



Uncle Willie ran a fast food shop and grocery store near the downtown pier. Every day, from seven o'clock in the morning, I would run the business with him. Noontime was usually the busiest hour, since the labourers in the areas would come in and buy some baked goods or a pattie for lunch. ('Pattie' is kind of Chinese beef bread that is a very popular Jamaican dish, especially for lunch.) We sold a lot of these and Uncle Willie made lots of money out of these sales.

I learned a lot from Uncle Willie, and in return, I helped him a lot too. At that time, he was not paying me any salary as I was working to repay what I owed him. Since I had a family back in China that I needed to support, however, I could not work for him for too long. I asked for his permission to work for other people and he agreed. I soon found a job in a Chinese grocery. Mr. Yau, my boss, paid me £5 a week. My job was to chop salted fish, pack the Chinese marinated ingredients<sup>9</sup> and flour, and sell the salted pig tails and salted beef. I worked very hard for Mr. Yau over the course of three years, but the money I made went to paying off my airfare debt. Not a penny was left for savings.

In 1962, Mr. Yau immigrated to Britain and sold his grocery. I needed to find another job again. My life seemed so lonely and hopeless that I started to fool around whenever I had time. And my heart turned wild.

At that time, there was great turmoil in mainland China, including a disastrous famine. Millions of refugees were fleeing to Hong Kong. Of course, I wanted my wife and children to seize this opportunity and also flee to Hong Kong. To that end, I saved very hard, even borrowing £30 from my boss, and sent all my money to a savings company called Tin Pui Company<sup>10</sup> in Hong Kong. I gave them specific instructions that they were not to send the money to mainland China but to keep it in my savings account for my wife to collect. I also wrote to tell my wife to collect the money in Hong Kong and urged her to go to go to Hong Kong as soon as possible. I regularly sent money to Tin Pui Company for a few months, until one day, this company sent me a checklist detailing all the food they had bought and delivered to China with my money.

My heart broke after I received this letter. I lost all confidence in China. Instead, it was replaced by a sense of hatred towards the Communist Party. I figured that the Communists could keep my family alive, so I stopped sending either money or letters to China from that day onwards. The Communist Party had broken my family. I decided that I would never ever care about anything that concerned China again.

After this, I started to mess around with women. It became a regular practice for me, along with a group of other Chinese men, including my boss, to fool around every Sunday when the business was closed.

---

<sup>9</sup> Traditional Chinese ingredients packed in a small bag to cook with meat; a tasty and common dish.

<sup>10</sup> It is unclear whether this was a bank or some other type of financial organisation.

## MY LIFE CORRUPTS IN JAMAICA

One quiet morning, an elegant young lady walked into the shop to buy some stuff. I approached her and we chatted happily. I then proposed a date with her after the shop closed that evening and surprisingly enough, we both showed up that night. Thereafter, we met almost every night. We became very intimate.

No sooner, this lady became pregnant. She couldn't do anything but go back to her father's place in the country to rest.

After she left, I felt more lonely and sad. I started to gamble or play mahjong with a group of friends all the time. Yet, I never won any money. I also visited brothels frequently. My life corrupted in this manner for quite awhile.

Later, that lady came back to me with a baby. She claimed that he was my son. Looking at the baby, I felt pity for him. I also thought that if I denied the child then, some bad things might happen in the future. So I rented a room for them and took care of all their living costs.

From that day onward, the only thing I could think of was running my own grocery. I asked her if she thought that I could borrow some money from her father. She said that her father used to go to the States every year to make money. I then asked her father and he instantly agreed to lend me £60. At that time, I had £40 deposited in the bank. Apart from that, I also organised a "mutual funding committee"<sup>11</sup> with a friend and collected some £150. No sooner, I found a small grocery. I paid £100 in cash to take it over and agreed to pay back the committee's money, as well as to pay for the goods, in installments.

At first, business went smoothly. I was making enough money to pay the bills and even to re-invest the stock. But two months later, business began to turn sour. Once, a thief broke in and stole quite a bit of money. And business got even worse. At home, that woman was always asking for trouble. We were always fighting and quarreling. Within two and a half years of me running the grocery, she had given birth to two more babies. She could not provide any help in the grocery, and when she was there, she quarreled and fought with our customers to such an extent that we could no longer run a business in that area anymore.

Finally, I closed the grocery and started working for other people again. I rented a place for her and our sons, fed them with the money I made, and visited them once a week. Later, I found out that this woman was seeing another man. At first, I didn't care what she was doing and let her do as she pleased – after all, we had never been married. But I insisted that I raised my own sons. No matter what happened between her and I, I worked regularly to make sure that my sons were fed and visited them every Sunday.

Later, this woman gave birth to another son again. She claimed that he was mine. I did not challenge her claim, as we already had three sons. And, as I had to raise three children, the fourth only meant feeding an extra mouth.

I was well aware of her affair, but I had to tolerate all her misbehaviour for my sons' sakes. I just let her do as she pleased. But she became more and more indiscrete.

---

<sup>11</sup> A common practice in Chinese society when a group of friends pool together to save money and to pay back money borrowed in installments.



Not only did she stop taking care of the kids, but she began to bring the other man home and sleep with him in front of my kids; or she would stay overnight somewhere else and ask other women to take care of the little ones. She left me no choice but to take my sons away. I moved to place called Buff Bay with my three sons. For a long time, she couldn't find us.

There were two Chinese families running businesses in that area. One was the Lee family; the other was the Man's. At first I worked for the Lees in their bakery, but Mr. Man was trying to attract young Chinese men to work for him and was offering a high salary. I quit the job in the bakery and went to work for him, where I enjoyed a salary of £10 a week, plus bonus and red packet money on major Chinese festivals.

The Man's family came from Man's House of the New Territories, and was headed by two brothers, one was called Man Yuen Wing, and the other, Man Yuen Dig. They moved to (Bo Wu Bay) from a smaller village and bought a piece of land there. They built two shops on the same street, one, a large wholesale store and the other, a supermarket. They also signed a contract with the government to be its wholesaler of construction materials and petroleum. They were also very involved in the wholesale business of chicken and chicken feed.

Their business was excellent. Every weekend, the supermarket was packed with customers. They even had their own cargo truck, which was used specially for loading goods at the city's pier. And they hired lots of Black labourers. I worked in this place for three years, and my three sons stayed with me during that period.

My eldest son couldn't speak, even at the age of five. The doctor also said that he was born with heart damage and he needed to take medicines constantly. One day, thinking that the pills were candies, he took a whole month's dose all at one time. He vomited incessantly and was sent to hospital, but during emergency treatment, he died.

After my son died, I lost all confidence that I could take care of my other two sons by myself. I felt so terrible that I actually didn't know what to do. I called my mother and asked for help. She hurried from the city to take my two sons with her and hired a babysitter for me. All I needed to do was to pay for the babysitter's fee and their daily expenses. After that, I went back to visiting my sons every Sunday. At that time, Wing Sung was three years old while Yi Yun was two. Their mother lived in the city, but she never went to visit them – not even once.



## **PLAN TO GO TO THE STATES**

Because of the woman I was involved with, I felt that my ten years in Jamaica had been totally wasted. I didn't have the courage to stay there anymore. I was over forty years old and I wanted to start a new life.

Every Sunday, I would take the coach and visit my sons in the city. (At that time, I was paying \$14 JA per week to the babysitter. After Jamaica became independent, we stopped using British pounds. At first, one Jamaican dollar could be converted into two US dollars. But after only two weeks, its value dropped to fifty cents.) After visiting my sons, I would usually go to see my sister. One Sunday, she asked me: "Vincent, do you want to go to the States?" I jumped for joy and responded immediately: "Of course I do." My sister said: "Mom wants you to go to the States and stay with her. What do you think?" I said: "Tell her I'll do so right away."

Mother had successfully applied for my elder sister and her daughter to come to the States. My mother wanted to be close to her family. But, during the winter, my sister would always go back to Jamaica with her daughter to escape from the cold. This upset my mother, especially during Christmas, when she was alone in an empty apartment. And she always shed tears. Moreover, mother had to pay the rent for the apartment all by herself throughout winter. So, she asked my third sister, who was the closest child to her, to find someone who could spend the winter with her in the States. As my third sister could not leave her own family in Jamaica, and knowing that I didn't want to live in Jamaica anymore, obviously I was the perfect candidate.

According to the American immigration laws, my mother needed to find an employer to sponsor me. In the meantime, my third sister did everything for me in Jamaica – filling in all the forms and documents as well as submitting them to the U.S. Embassy. Therefore, when she informed me that I had received permission to go to the States, I was very surprised. If it was not for her, I really don't know when I could have achieved my goal of immigration.

In February 1969, I was given an appointment for an interview with the personnel at the US embassy. I also had to do a health check. I passed both successfully and on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969, I left Jamaica and flew to Chicago . . .

# List of Abbreviations

|     |                      |
|-----|----------------------|
| CO  | Colonial Office      |
| PP  | Parliamentary Papers |
| PRO | Public Record Office |



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Primary Resources

### 1. Manuscript Collections

Public Record Office, Colonial Office, CO 295/14

Public Record Office, Colonial Office, CO 295/15

Public Record Office, Colonial Office, CO 295/16

Public Record Office, Colonial Office, CO 295/17

Public Record Office, Colonial Office, CO 295/18

Public Record Office, Colonial Office, CO 295/222

Parliamentary Papers, vol. XXXV, Correspondence Relative to Emigration of Labourers to the West Indies and the Mauritius from the West Coast of Africa, the East Indies and China, 1844 (Chadwyck-Healey 48.291 – 48.292)

Parliamentary Papers, vol. LXVIII, Copies or Extracts of Despatches Relating to Chinese Immigrants Recently Introduced into the Colonies of British Guiana and Trinidad, August 1853 (Chadwyck-Healey 57.500 – 57.502)

Parliamentary Papers, vol. XXVII, Fourteenth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, 1854 (Chadwyck-Healey 58.239 – 58.241)

Parliamentary Papers, vol. XX, Report of the Commissioners to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in British Guiana, June 1871 (Chadwyck-Healey, 77.174 – 77.178)

### 2. Newspaper Articles

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 5 March 1853

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 7 July 1853

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 16 July 1853

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 19 January 1854

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 30 October 1860

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 10 June 1869

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 12 August 1869

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 16 September 1869

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 22 March 1870

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 14 April 1870

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 1 November 1870

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 10 November 1870

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 21 August 1871

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 3 March 1874

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 5 March 1874

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 10 March 1874

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 15 August 1874

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 25 February 1875

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 10 June 1875

Editorial, *Royal Gazette*, 28 December 1875

‘Emigration’ (From Willmer and Smith’s *European Times*, 1 January), *Royal Gazette*, 28 January 1854

‘Emigration from China’, *Royal Gazette*, 27 October 1860

‘From Trinidad’, *Royal Gazette*, 12 June 1860

‘Improved System of Immigration’, *Royal Gazette*, 27 September 1860

‘Letter from the Anti-Slavery Society to Secretary of State for the Colonies’, *Royal Gazette*, 9 February 1860

‘Letter to the editors’, *Royal Gazette*, 12 February 1850

‘Reports of the Stipendiary Magistrate of Districts D, E and G in respect to the Chinese as Labourers’, *Royal Gazette*, 16 July 1853

‘Report of Trinidad’s Standing Committee on Immigration’, *Royal Gazette*, 25 August 1860

‘The Chinese Labourers in the West Indies’, *Royal Gazette*, 16 February 1854

‘The New Chinese Immigration’, *Royal Gazette*, 28 August 1869



'Trinidad – The Chinese', *Royal Gazette*, 7 July 1853

## Books and Articles

'A West Indian', *The Coolie in Demerara. A Few Words Upon 'The Coolie, His Rights and Wrongs' by the Author of 'Ginx's Baby'* (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1871)

Adamson, Alan H, 'The Impact of Indentured Immigration on the Political Economy of British Guiana', *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834 – 1920*, ed. by Kay Saunders (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 42 – 56

Ahmad, Aijaz, 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'', *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 77 – 82

Althusser, Louis, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', *Critical Thought Since 1965*, ed. by Hazard Adams and Leroy Searles (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, Florida State University Press, 1986), pp. 238 – 250

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983)

Anderson, Kay J., 'The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 79(4) (1987), 580 – 598

Anthony, Michael, 'Butler on the Road', *The Chieftain's Carnival and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group, 1993), pp. 143 – 161

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Drunkard of the River', *Best West Indian Stories*, ed. by Kenneth Ramchand (UK: Nelson Caribbean, 1984), pp. 19 – 23

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Many Things', *Cricket in the Road* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1973), pp. 66 – 71

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Village Shop', *Cricket in the Road* op. cit., pp. 115 – 120

Atteck, Helen and Philip Atteck, *Stress of Weather. A Collection of Original Source Documents Relating to a Voyage from China to Trinidad, West Indies in 1862 in Conjunction with a Family Chronicle* (St. Catharines: Wanata Enterprises, 1999)

Balibar, Étienne, 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology', *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*, by Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. by Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 86 – 106

- , 'Racism and Nationalism', *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*, by Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. by Chris Turner op. cit., pp. 37 – 67
- Barrett, William Garland, *Immigration to the British West Indies. Is it the Slave-Trade Revived or Not?* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1859)
- Beaumont, Joseph, *The New Slavery. An Account of the Indian and Chinese Immigrants in British Guiana* (London: W. Ridgway, 1871)
- Beckford, George L., *Persistent Poverty. Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York, London and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972)
- Bell, Wendell and Ivar Oxaal, *Decisions of Nationhood. Political and Social Development in the British Caribbean*, Issues in the Social Science Foundation and Department of International Relations Monograph Series in World Affairs, Monographs no. 3 and 4 (Denver: University of Denver, 1963 – 64)
- Benn, Denis M, 'The Theory of Plantation Economy and Society: A Methodological Critique', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 12(3) (1974), 249 – 260
- Bernabé, Jean, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, 'In Praise of Creoleness', trans. by Mohammed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (1990), 869 – 909
- Bernard, Deryck M., 'Ben', *Going Home and Other Tales from Guyana* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2002), pp. 1 – 5
- Best, Lloyd A., 'The Mechanism of Plantation-Type Economies. Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy', *Social and Economic Studies*, 17(3) (1968), 283 – 397
- Bhabha, Homi K. 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation', *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 3 – 7
- , 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation', *Nation and Narration*, op.cit., pp. 291 – 322
- , 'The Other Question. Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66 – 84
- Bierce, Ambrose, 'Peaceful Expulsion', *The Collected Works* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002)
- Billig, Michael, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995)



- Boardman, Eugene P., 'Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion', *The Far East Quarterly*, 10 (1951), 115 – 124
- Bolland, O. Nigel, 'Creolisation and Creole Societies. A Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History', *Questioning Creole*, ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Glen L. Richards (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers and Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2002), pp. 15 – 46
- Bonacich, Edna, 'A Theory of Middleman Minorities', *American Sociological Review*, 38(5) (1973), 583 – 594
- Boswell, Terry E., 'A Split Labor Market Analysis of Discrimination Against Chinese Immigrants, 1850 – 1882', *American Sociological Review*, 51(3) (1986), 352 – 371
- Brathwaite, Edward Kamau, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770 – 1820*, (London: Clarendon Press, 1971)
- Brereton, Bridget, 'The Development of Identity: The Black Middle Class of Trinidad in the Later Nineteenth Century', *Caribbean Freedom. Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, ed. by Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Kingston: I Randle Publishers, 1993), pp. 274 – 283
- Brennan, Timothy, 'The National Longing for Form', *Nation and Narration*, op. cit., pp. 44 – 70
- Bronkhurst, H.V.P., *British Guyana and its Labouring Population* (London: T. Woolmer, 1883)
- Broom, Leonard, 'The Social Differentiation of Jamaica', *American Sociological Review*, 19(2) (1954), 115 – 125
- Brown, Martin and Peter Philips, 'Competition, Racism and Hiring Practices Among California Manufacturers, 1860 – 1882', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 40(1) (1996), 61 – 74
- Bryan, Patrick, 'The Black Middle Class in Nineteenth Century Jamaica', *Caribbean Freedom. Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, op. cit, pp. 284 – 295
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Creolization of the Chinese Community in Jamaica', *Ethnic Minorities in Caribbean Societies*, ed. by Rhoda E. Reddock, (St. Augustine: The University of the West Indies, 1996), pp. 173 – 271
- Burnham, Forbes, *A Destiny to Mould. Selected Speeches by the Prime Minister of Guyana*, compiled by C.A. Nascimento and R.A. Burrowes (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1970)

Carlyle, Thomas, 'Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, XL (1849), (accessed on: <http://cepa.newschool.edu/het/texts/carlyle/carlodnq.htm>, as of 15 May 2002)

Cerulo, Karen A., *Identity Designs. The Sights and Sounds of a Nation* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995)

Chamoiseau, Patrick, Raphaël Confiant, Jean Bernabé and Lucien Taylor, 'Créolité Bites' (in conversation), *Transition*, 75 (1997), 124 – 161

Chang, Carlisle, 'Chinese in Trinidad Carnival', *The Drama Review*, 42(3) (1998), 213 – 219

Chang, Victor, "'Counter Culture': The Chinese Shop in Jamaica", unpublished, presented at the Toronto Hakka Heritage & Culture Conference, York University, Toronto, Ontario, 29 & 30 December, 2000

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Light in the Shop', *Small Axe*, 2 (1997), 103 – 108

Charles, Faustin, 'Signpost of the Phoenix', *Caribbean New Wave: Contemporary Short Stories*, selected by Stewart Brown (Oxford: Heinemann International, 1990), pp. 43 – 52

Chen, Willi, 'Assam's Iron Chest', *King of the Carnival and Other Stories* (London: Hansib Publishing Limited, 1988), pp. 60 – 63

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Ceasar', op. cit., pp. 123 – 142

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Lalloo's Wrath', op. cit., pp. 37 – 45

\_\_\_\_\_, 'No Pork, Cheese', op. cit., pp. 51 – 57

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Trotters', op. cit., pp. 117 – 112

Clementi, Cecil, *The Chinese in British Guiana* (British Guiana: 'The Argosy' Company Limited, 1915)

Cohen, Robin, *Global Diasporas. An Introduction* (Cambridge: UCL Press, 1997)

## N

Connor, Walker, "'Man is a Rational Animal' ('Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond')", *Ethnonationalism. The Quest for Understanding* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 195 – 209

\_\_\_\_\_, "'More Recent Developments' ('Ethnonationalism')", *Ethnonationalism. The Quest for Understanding* op. cit., pp. 68 – 86

\_\_\_\_\_, "'Terminological Chaos' ('A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a . . .')", *Ethnonationalism. The Quest for Understanding* op. cit., pp. 89 – 117



- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Nation and its Myth', *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, ed. by Anthony D. Smith (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 48 – 57
- \_\_\_\_\_, '“The Seductive Lure of Economic Explanations’ (‘Eco- or Ethno-Nationalism’)', *Ethnonationalism. The Quest for Understanding* op. cit., pp. 144 – 164
- \_\_\_\_\_, '“When is a Nation?’ (‘From Tribe to Nation?’)', *Ethnonationalism. The Quest for Understanding* op. cit., pp. 210 – 226
- Craddock, Susan, 'Embodying Place: Pathologizing Chinese and Chinatown in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco', *Antipode*, 31(4) (1999), 351 – 391
- Craig, Christine, 'The Virgin', *Mint Tea and Other Stories* (Oxford: Heinemann International, 1993), pp. 47 – 57
- Crawford Campbell, Persia, *Chinese Coolie Emigration to Countries Within the British Empire* (London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1923)
- Crosland, Thomas, 'The Heathen Chinees', *The Five Notions* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, May 2002)
- Cross, Malcolm, 'Cultural Pluralism and Sociological Theory: A Critique and Re-evaluation', *Social and Economic Studies*, 17(4), 381 – 397
- de Boissière, Ralph, *Crown Jewel* (Suffolk: Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press), 1981)
- Deosaran, Ramesh, *Eric Williams. The Man, His Ideas and His Politics. A Study of Political Power* (Port of Spain: Signum Publishing Company Limited, 1981)
- Despres, Leo A., 'Anthropological Theory, Cultural Pluralism, and the Study of Complex Societies', *Current Anthropology*, 9(1) (1968), 3 – 26
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana*, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1967)
- Des Voeux, G. W., *My Colonial Service in British Guiana, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Fiji, Australia, Newfoundland, and Hong Kong with Interludes*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1903)
- Duckett, Margaret, 'Plain Language from Bret Harte', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 11(4) (1957), 241 – 260
- During, Simon, 'Literature – Nationalism's Other? The Case for Revision', *Nation and Narration*, op. cit., pp. 138 – 153
- Dyson, Edward, 'A Golden Shanty', *The Penguin Book of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Australian Literature*, ed. by Michael Ackland (Victoria: Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 1993), pp. 250 – 260

- \_\_\_\_\_, 'A Poor Joke', *Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Ah Ling, the Leper', *Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines*, op. cit.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Fossicker', *Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines*, op. cit.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Jonah's Luck', *Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines*, op. cit.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives* (London and East Haven: Pluto Press, 1993)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Ethnicity versus Nationalism', *Journal of Peace Research*, 28 (3) (1991) (at: <http://www.sv.uio.no/~geirthe/Ethnat.html>, as of July 2001)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Ethnicity, Race, Class and Nation', *Ethnicity*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 28 – 31
- Fairmann, John, *Cheap Sugar or Coolie Immigration to the West Indies. In a Series of Letters*, reprinted from 'The Witness' (Edinburgh: Paton and Ritchie, 1859)
- Fanon, Frantz, 'The Fact of Blackness', *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann, (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp. 109 – 140
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'On National Culture', *The Wretched of the Earth*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. by Constance Farrington (1963), 1<sup>st</sup> Evergreen Edition (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 166 – 199
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness', *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., pp. 117 – 165
- Franck, Harry A., *Roaming Through the West Indies* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1920)
- Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983)
- Gilmore, John, *Faces of the Caribbean* (London: Latin America Bureau, 2000)
- Glissant, Édouard, *Caribbean Discourse. Selected Essays*, trans. by J. Michael Dash (Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, Carafe Book Series, 1989)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Introduction à un poétique du divers* (France: Éditions Gallimard, 1996)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990)
- Green, William A., 'Emancipation to Indenture: A Question of Imperial Morality', *Journal of British Studies*, 22(2) (1983), 98 – 121



Green, William A., 'The West Indies and Indentured Labor Migration – The Jamaican Experience', *Indentured Labour in the British Empire*, ed. by Kay Saunders (London and Canberra: Croom Helm Ltd., 1984), pp. 1 - 41

Guibernau, Montserrat, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996)

Ha, Marie-Paule, 'Cultural Identities in the Chinese Diaspora', *Mots Pluriels*, 7 (1998) (accessed online at: [www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP798mph.html](http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP798mph.html), as of June 2002)

Hall, Douglas, 'The Flight from the Estates Reconsidered', *Caribbean Freedom. Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, op. cit., pp. 55 – 63

Hall, Laura J., *The Chinese in Guyana: The Making of a Creole Community*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, submitted to the University of California at Berkely, Ethnic Studies Graduate Division, 1995

Hall, Stuart, 'Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?', *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 1 – 17

\_\_\_\_\_, 'New Ethnicities', *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, op. cit., pp. 223 – 227

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Representation, Meaning and Language', *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage in association with The Open University, 1997), pp. 15 – 64

Harris, Wilson, 'Creoleness: The Crossroads of a Civilization?', *Caribbean Creolization. Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature and Identity*, ed. by Kathleen M. Baluntansky and Marie-Agnès Souricau (Gainesville, Tallahassee, Tampa, et al: University Press of Florida, and Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies), pp. 23 – 35

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Secret Ladder', *The Guyana Quartet* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. 353 – 464

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Whole Armour', *The Guyana Quartet*, op. cit., pp. 239 – 352

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Womb of Space* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1983)

Hart, Richard, *From Occupation to Independence. A Short History of the Peoples of the English-Speaking Caribbean Region* (London: Pluto Press, 1998)

Harte, Bret 'John Chinaman', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XIV, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 220 – 223

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Plain Language from Truthful James', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XII, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company,

1897), pp. 129 – 131

\_\_\_\_\_, 'See Yup', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XVI, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 144 – 160

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Latest Chinese Outrage' *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XII, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 142 – 145

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Three Vagabonds of Trinidad', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. XVII, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 186 – 201

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Wan Lee, the Pagan', *The Writings of Bret Harte*, vol. II, Standard Library Edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), pp. 262 – 279

Higman, B.W., 'The Chinese in Trinidad, 1806 – 1838', *Caribbean Studies*, 12(3) (1972), 21 – 44

Hintzen, Percy C., 'Race and Creole Ethnicity in the Caribbean', *Questioning Creole*, op. cit., pp. 92 – 110

Ho, Christine, 'Creolization of the Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica', *Caribbean Asians: Chinese, Indian, and Japanese Experiences in Trinidad and the Dominican Republic*, ed. by Roger Sanjek (New York: Queens College, CUNY: Asian/American Center at Queens College, 1990), pp. 31 – 61

\_\_\_\_\_, '"Hold the Chow Mein, Gimme Soca': Creolization of the Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad and Jamaica', *Amerasia*, 15(2) (1989), 3 – 25

Hobsbawm, Eric J., *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1 – 14

Hosein, Clyde, 'The Man at the Gate of the House of Refuge', *Caribbean New Wave: Contemporary Short Stories*, op. cit., pp. 87 – 105

Hutchinson, John and Anthony D. Smith, 'Introduction', *Ethnicity*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 1 – 14

Huttenback, R.A., 'The British Empire as a 'White Man's Country' – Racial Attitudes and Immigration Legislation in the Colonies of White Settlement', *Journal of British Studies*, 13(1) (1973), 108 – 137



- Jagan, Cheddi, *Forbidden Freedom. The Story of British Guiana* (London: Hansib Publishing Limited, Coolie Odyssey, 1989 reprint)
- Jenkins, Edward, *Lutchmee and Dilloo. A Study of West Indian Life in Three Volumes* (London: William Mullan & Son, 1877)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Coolie. His Rights and Wrongs* (London: Strahan & Co. Publishers, 1871)
- Jin, Meiling, 'Short Fuse', *Song of the Boatwoman* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press Ltd., 1996), pp. 87 – 97
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Victoria', *Song of the Boatwoman*, op. cit., pp. 7 – 22
- Johnson, Howard, 'The Anti-Chinese Riots of 1918 in Jamaica', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 28(3) (1982), 19 – 32
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Chinese in Trinidad in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 10(1) (1987), 82 – 95
- Johnson, Joyce, 'Representations of the Chinese in Anglophone Caribbean Fiction', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 16(3) (1997), 36 – 54
- Jones, Iva G., 'Trollope, Carlyle, and Mill on the Negro: An Episode in the History of Ideas', *Journal of Negro History*, 52(3) (1967), 185 – 199
- Kedourie, Elie, *Nationalism*, fourth expanded edition (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994)
- Keens-Douglas, Paul, 'Slim Teet', *Tanti and de Oval, Selected Works of Paul Keens-Douglas* ([n.p.] 1992), pp. 50 – 53
- Khan, Ismith, 'The Magic Ring', *A Day in the Country and Other Stories* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Books, 1994), pp. 34 – 52
- Kingsley, Charles, *At Last. A Christmas in the West Indies* (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1889, first published, 1871)
- Kirby Jr., James E., 'The Foochow Anti-Missionary Riot – August 30, 1878', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 25(4) (1966), 665 – 679
- Kirke, Henry, *Twenty-Five Years in British Guiana* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1898)
- Kirkpatrick, Margery, *From the Middle Kingdom to the New World. Aspects of the Chinese Experience in Migration to British Guiana, Volume 1* (Georgetown: Margery Kirkpatrick, 1993)
- Knox, Bruce, 'The Queen's Letter of 1865 and British Policy Towards Emancipation and Indentured Labour in the West Indies, 1830 – 1865', *The Historical Journal*, 29(2) (1986), 345 – 367

- Kuhn, Philip A., 'Origins of the Taiping Vision: Cross-Cultural Dimensions of a Chinese Rebellion', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 19(3) (1977), 350 – 366
- Kwok Crawford, Marlene, *Scenes from the History of the Chinese in Guyana* (Georgetown: Marlene Kwok Crawford, 1989)
- Latin America Bureau (Research and Action Ltd.), *Guyana: Fraudulent Revolution* (Nottingham: Russell Press Ltd., 1984)
- Laurence, K.O., *Immigration into the West Indies in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Kingston: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971)
- Lee, Easton, *From Behind the Counter. Poems from a Rural Jamaican Experience* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Heritage Call. Ballad for the Children of the Dragon* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001)
- Lee Tom Yin, *The Chinese in Jamaica* (Kingston: Lee Tom Yin, 1957)
- Leland, Charles, 'A-lùm the Baker', *Pidgin-English Sing-Song* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Mary Coe', *Pidgin-English Sing-Song*, op. cit.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Ballad of Wing-King-Wo', *Pidgin-English Sing-Song*, op. cit.
- Lewis, Gordon, 'Pro-Slavey Ideology', *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, ed. by Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishing Limited, 2000), pp. 544 – 579
- Lind, Andrew W., 'Adjustment Patterns Among the Jamaican Chinese', *Social and Economic Studies*, 7(2), 144 – 164
- Look Lai, Walton, 'Chinese Indentured Labor Migrations to the British West Indies in the Nineteenth Century', *Caribbean Asians: Chinese, Indian, and Japanese Experiences in Trinidad and the Dominican Republic*, op. cit., pp. 3 – 30
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar. Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838 – 1918* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Caribbean', *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas*, ed. by Lynn Pan (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), pp. 248 – 253
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Chinese in the West Indies, 1806 – 1995. A Documentary History* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998)



- Lovelace, Earl, *The Dragon Can't Dance* (Essex: Longman Group Limited, Longman Caribbean Writers Series, 1985)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Wine of Astonishment* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, Caribbean Writers Series, 1986)
- Lowenthal, David, *West Indian Societies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972)
- Lucas, R. Valerie, 'Yellow Peril in the Promised Land: The Representation of the Oriental and the Question of American Identity', *Europe and its Others*, vol. 1, proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July, 1984 (Essex: University of Essex, 1985), pp. 41 – 57
- Lynch-Campbell, H., *Chinese in Jamaica* (Kingston: City Printery Ltd., 1957)
- Macgregor Wise, J., 'Home: Territory and Identity', *Cultural Studies*, 14(2) (2000), 295 – 310
- Mais, Roger, *The Hills Were Joyful Together* (Kingston and Port of Spain: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., Caribbean Writers Series, 1981)
- Marshall, Paule, 'British Guiana', *Soul Clap Hands and Sing* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1988), pp. 67 – 127
- Mathieson, William Law, *British Slavery and its Abolition 1823 – 1838* (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1967)
- McCree, Roy Derek, 'The Chinese Game of Whe Whe in Trinidad: From Criminalisation to Normalization', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 42(2) (1996), 1 – 28
- McKenzie, Alecia, 'Cho, Delsha, Man', *Satellite City and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992), pp. 114 – 123
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Jakes Makes', *Satellite City and Other Stories*, op. cit., pp. 54 – 78
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Natasha', *Satellite City and Other Stories*, op. cit., pp. 31 – 49
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Pinkie', *Satellite City and Other Stories*, op. cit., pp. 24 – 30
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Stuck in the Maid's Room', *Satellite City and Other Stories* op. cit., pp. 9 – 23
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Grenada Defense League', *Satellite City and Other Stories* op. cit., pp. 124 – 148
- McKenzie, Earl, 'Platform Shoes', *Two Roads to Mount Joyful and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Ltd., 1992), pp. 46 – 57

- Mei, June, 'Socioeconomic Origins of Emigration. Guangdong to California, 1850 – 1882', *Modern China*, 5(4) (1979), 463 – 501
- Mendes, Alfred H., *Black Fauns* (London: New Beacon Books, Ltd., 1984)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Her Chinaman's Way', *From Trinidad. An Anthology of Early West Indian Writing*, ed. by Reinhard W. Sander (Kent: Hodder and Stoughton Educational, 1978), pp. 103 – 118
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Pitch Lake* (London: New Beacon Books Ltd., 1980)
- Merivale, Herman, 'Lecture XI', *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), pp. 300 – 348
- Millett, Trevor M., *The Chinese in Trinidad* (Port of Spain: Imprint Caribbean Limited, 1993)
- Millett, Trevor, 'The Chinese Community in Trinidad and Tobago: A Case Study of a Commercial Ethnic Minority', *Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean: Culture, Structure, Conjuncture*, ed. by Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine: The University of the West Indies, 1994), pp. 177 – 202
- Mill, John Stuart, 'The Negro Question', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 1850 (accessed at: <http://melbecon.unimelb.edu.au/het/mill/negro.htm> as of 14 May 2002)
- Mintz, Sidney W., 'Caribbean Nationhood: An Anthropological Perspective', *Caribbean Transformations* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press Ltd., 1984, paperback edition), pp. 302 – 328
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Caribbean Region', *Daedalus*, 103(2) (1974), 45 – 71
- Mittelholzer, Edgar, *A Morning in the Office* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., Caribbean Writers Series, 1974)
- Mordecai, Martin, 'Chinyman', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 15(4) (1969), 40
- Moore, Brian L., *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism. Colonial Guyana 1838 – 1900* (Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, and Montreal & Kingston, London and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society. Guyana After Slavery 1838 – 1891* (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1987)
- Morris, H.S., 'Some Aspects of the Concept of Plural Society', *Man* (new series), 2(2) (1967), 169 – 184



- Naipaul, Shiva, 'The Beauty Contest', *A Man of Mystery and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Group, 1984), pp. 1 – 11
- Naipaul, V.S., *A House for Mr. Biswas*, 3<sup>rd</sup> impression, Russell edition (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1964)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Guerrillas* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1975)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Miguel Street* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1959)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Baker's Story', *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, ed. by E.A. Markham (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1996), pp. 165 – 175
- Nash, Manning, 'The Core Elements of Ethnicity', *Ethnicity*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 24 – 28
- Nettleford, Rex, *Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (William Collins and Sangster Ltd., 1970)
- Norman Washington Manley and the New Jamaica. Selected Speeches and Writings 1938 – 1968*, ed. by Rex Nettleford (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1971)
- Oxaal, Ivar, *Black Intellectuals Come to Power. The Rise of Creole Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1968)
- Palumbo-Liu, David, 'The Minority Self as Other: Problematics of Representation in Asian American Literature', *Cultural Critique*, 28 (1994), 75 – 102
- Parekh, Bhikhu, 'Defining National Identity in a Multicultural Society', *People, Nation and State: The Meaning of Ethnicity and Nationalism*, ed. by Edward Mortimer (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999)
- Patrick Jones, Marion, *Pan Beat* (Port of Spain: Columbus Publishers Ltd., 1973)
- Patterson, Orlando, 'Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance. A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study', *Ethnicity. Theory and Experience*, ed. by Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 303 – 349
- Paul, Rodman W., 'The Origin of the Chinese Issue in California', *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 25(2) (1938), 181 – 196
- Paulsen, George E., 'The Szechwan Riots of 1895 and American 'Missionary Diplomacy'', *The Historical Journal*, 28(2) (1969), 285 – 298
- Porter, Andrew, 'Commerce and Christianity: The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth Century Slogan', *The Historical Journal*, 28(3) (1985), 597 – 621

- Powell, Patrica, *The Pagoda* (San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998)
- Poynting, Jeremy, 'You Want to be a Coolie Woman?' Gender and Ethnic Identity in Indo-Caribbean Women's Writing", *Caribbean Women Writers. Essays from the First International Conference*, ed. by Selwyn Cudjoe (Wellesley: Calaloux Publications, 1990), pp. 98 – 105
- Rankin, Henry William, 'Political Values of the American Missionary', *American Journal of Sociology*, 13(2) (1907), 145 – 182
- Reckford, Michael, 'Dog Food', *The Faber Book of Contemporary Caribbean Short Stories*, ed. by Mervyn Morris (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1990), pp. 175 – 180
- Rohlehr, Gordon, 'The Culture of Williams. Context, Performance, Legacy', *Callaloo*, 20(4), 849 – 888
- Rooplall, Monar, 'Money Can't Play', *Estate People*, op. cit., pp. 9 – 15
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'That Woman', *Estate People* (Georgetown: Roraima Publishers, 1994), pp. 51 – 57
- Said, Edward, 'Orientalism', *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, op. cit., pp. 87 – 91
- Saunders, Kenneth, 'When East First Met West: Some Notes on Early Contacts', *Pacific Affairs*, 15(7) (1932), 608 – 615
- Scharnhorst, Gary, 'Ways that are Dark': Appropriations of Bret Harte's 'Plain Language from Truthful James', *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 51(3) 1996), 377 – 399
- Schwarz, Bill, 'England in Europe: Reflections on National Identity and Cultural Theory', *Cultural Studies*, 6 (1992), 198 – 206
- Seecharan, Clem, *Tiger in the Stars. The Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana* (London: Macmillan, 1997)
- Selvon, Samuel, *A Brighter Sun* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1985)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Down the Main', *Ways of Sunlight* (Essex: Longman Caribbean Limited, 1973), pp. 38 – 49
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Highway in the Sun', *Highway in the Sun. A Collection of Plays* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1991), pp. 4 – 52
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Holiday in Five Rivers', *Ways of Sunlight* op. cit., pp. 50 – 58



- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Song of Sixpence', *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, op. cit., pp. 134 - 145
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Turn Again Tiger* (Port of Spain, and Kingston: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., [n.d.])
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Wartime Activities', *Ways of Sunlight*, op. cit., pp. 82 - 93
- Senior, Olive, 'The Tenantry of Birds', *Arrival of the Snake Woman and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989), pp. 46 - 61
- Sewell, W., *The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1861)
- Shaw, Thomas A., 'To Be or not to Be Chinese: Differential Expressions of Chinese Culture and Solidarity in the British West Indies', *Caribbean Ethnicity Revisited*, ed. by Stephen Glazier (New York, London, Paris, et al.: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1985), pp. 71 - 185
- Sherlock, Philip, *Norman Manley* (London: MacMillan London Limited, 1980)
- Shinebourne, Janice, 'London and New York', unpublished, pp. 1 - 6
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Berbice Marriage Match', unpublished, pp. 1 - 8
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Last English Plantation* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1988)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Timepiece* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, [n.d.])
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Twin Influences: Guyana in the 1960s and Anglophone Caribbean Literature", *Gender and Ethnic Identity in Indo-Caribbean Women's Writing*, op. cit., pp. 142 - 144
- Sires, Ronald V., 'Sir Henry Barkly and the Labor Problem in Jamaica, 1853 - 1856', *Journal of Negro History*, 25(2) (1940), 216 - 235
- Smith, Anthony D., 'Introduction: Ethnicity and Nationalism', *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, ed. by Anthony D. Smith (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 1 - 4
- \_\_\_\_\_, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed?', *Re Imagining the Nation*, ed. by Marjorie Kingrose and Adam J. Lerner (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 9 - 28
- Smith, M.G., *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965)

- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1988), pp. 271 – 313
- Standish, Robert, *Mr. On Loong*, reprint (London: Peter Davies Limited, 1950)
- Stanley, Brian, 'Commerce and Christianity: Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842 – 1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26(1) (1983), 71 – 94
- Stanley, E., *Claims and Resources of the West Indian Colonies. A Letter* (London: T & W Boone, 1850)
- Stephens, James Brunton, 'My Chineese Cook', *The Poetical Works of Brunton Stephens* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'My Other Chineese Cook', *The Poetical Works of Brunton Stephens* op. cit.
- 'Stewart Brown Interviews Willi Chen, Author of *The King of the Carnival* (Hansib 1988)', *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 5(1&2) (1992), 106 – 112
- Sue-A-Quan, Trev, *Cane Reapers. Chinese Indentured Immigrants in Guyana* (Vancouver: Riftwood Publishing, 1999)
- Teng, Yuan Cheng, 'Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 23(1) (1963), 55 – 67
- The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books Ltd., [n.d.])
- Trollope, Anthony, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968 reprint)
- Underhill, Edward Bean, *The West Indies: Their Social and Religious Condition* (Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970)
- van der Veer, Peter, 'Introduction: The Diasporic Imagination', *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora*, ed. by Peter van der Veer, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 1 – 16
- Wallerstein, Immanuel, 'The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity', *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*, op. cit., pp. 71 – 85
- Walrond, Eric, 'The Wharf Rats', *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, op. cit. pp. 95 – 106



- Walsh, David, 'The Role of Ideology in Cultural Reproduction', *Cultural Reproduction*, ed. by Chris Jenks (London, UK: Routledge, 1993), pp. 228 – 249
- Ward, Frederick. 'Chinee', *Woman Must Weep* (accessed on Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, as of May 2002)
- Webber, A.R.F., *Centenary History and Handbook of British Guiana* (British Guiana: 'The Argosy' Company Limited, 1931)
- Williams, Eric, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (Port of Spain: PNM Publishing Co. Ltd., 1962)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Inward Hunger. The Education of a Prime Minister* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, second edition, 1971)
- Williams, N.D., *Ikael Torass* (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1976)
- Williams, Noel, 'Tourists', *The Crying of Rainbirds* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1992), pp. 39 – 44
- Wilmot, Swithin, 'Emancipation in Action. Workers and Wage Conflict in Jamaica 1838 – 1840, in *Caribbean Freedom. Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, op. cit., pp. 48 – 54
- Woodroffe, Noel, 'Wing's Way', *Best West Indian Stories*, op. cit., pp. 138 – 144
- Wynter, Sylvia, *The Hills of Hebron* (Essex: Longman Group Limited (Longman Drumbeat), 1984)
- Yap, P.M., 'The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-Ch'uan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion', *The Far East Quarterly*, 13(3) (1954), 287 – 304
- Yu, Ouyang, 'All the Lower Orders: Representations of the Chinese Cooks, Market Gardeners and Other Lower-Class People in Australian Literature from 1888 to 1988', *Kunapipi*, 15(3) (1993), 21 – 34

### Internet Resources

- Alana's Trinbago Pages, <http://users.erols.com/alana.interport/trinbago.html>, as of August 2002
- Caribbean Central: The Home of the Caribbean Community, <http://www.caribcentral.com/> as of July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, <http://www.gov.tt/ttgov/default>, as of July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001
- Guyana News and Information, <http://www.guyana.org/> as of July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001

International Civic Heraldry, [www.ngw.nl](http://www.ngw.nl), as of August 2002

Island Connoisseur – The Caribbean Supersite, <http://www.caribbeansupersite.com>,  
as of 11 July 2001

Jamaicaway.com, <http://www.jamaicaway.com/> as of 4 July 2001

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,  
<http://www.foreign.gov.tt>, as of 10 July 2001

Sweet Jamaica, <http://www.sweet-jamaica.com/> as of 10 July 2001

World Flag Data Base, [www.flags.net](http://www.flags.net), as of August 2002

### **Interviews, etc.**

Conversation with Easton Lee, Kingston, Jamaica, 12 July 2002

Conversation with Willi Chen, Coventry, UK, 30 July 2002 (by phone)

Conversation with Victor Chang, Kingston, Jamaica, 12 July 2002

E-mail from Willi Chen, 3 August 2002